An Ethnographic Investigation into Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions and Practices in Relation to Learner Autonomy in a Secondary School in Libya

By

Abdallah Elmahjoub

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Abstract:

The shift toward learner-centred approaches in language teaching and learning has resulted in greater interest in the role of the learner. The trend towards learner autonomy in this regard has occupied a wide space in the literature. One of the issues that has been hotly debated in the field of learner autonomy is its appropriateness / inappropriateness to certain cultures; more specifically, autonomy has sometimes been referred to as alien and inappropriate to non-Western cultures.

This study aims to investigate the Libyan context which is categorised as one of the contexts in which autonomy is claimed to be inappropriate. However, education policy in Libya encourages learners to take responsibility for their learning and autonomy can take various manifestations and degrees. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to see how autonomy is manifested and what impinges on it through investigating how the participants perceive and practise their roles in the teaching-learning process, and how the concept of learners being allowed to take active roles is conceived in the context of this study.

The means through which I approached the context were ethnographic methods to the collection and analysis of data. These are interviews and observations. This is because the investigation requires 'living the experience and seeing *a* truth'—in order to abstain from claiming that there is only one truth. Findings derived from investigating the context related to the participants' general appreciation of the modes of collaboration and negotiation in learning. Teachers mostly held positive attitudes about allowing learners opportunities to be active, responsible learners, and learners themselves generally perceived themselves as adopting such roles. One of the significant modes that was particularly preferred for most of the teachers and learners was teachers providing help and encouragement and scaffolding learners to take more autonomous stances in their learning. The participants, particularly teachers, head-teachers and inspectors, emphasised the centralisation of education policy through which they were sometimes deprived of chances to turn ideas or initiative into practical work. There were other factors that impinged on the participants' practices, such as constraints placed by the materials, the exams and

length of lessons. However, autonomy was seen to be realised in a contextually relevant form. Participants exhibited psychological readiness for being autonomous: for learners, they were active and showed enthusiasm for working collaboratively, while teachers demonstrated awareness of their roles as helpers for learners. On a technical level, participants complained about the layout of classes and the shortage of technology based aids such as computers that they suggested have a considerable effect on their teaching and learning. Also there was a degree of teachers controlling lessons, and learners recognising this control and their roles as active agents in learning. Sometimes teachers showed almost complete control of lessons with learners' reactions ranging from succumbing to this control to challenging it and negotiating active roles in their learning. Socio-culturally, the study gained insightful findings in terms of appreciation by the participants of collaborative and collective work, both learners with learners and learners with teachers. In this, teachers worked to bridge the gaps between learners' current situation where help and guidance are needed to stages where learners become gradually more autonomous in their learning.

This study is hoped to provide insights into understanding the power relations between teachers and learners in Libya for a more effective implementation of education policy, and also to provide a theoretical contribution to the field of learner autonomy.

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Chapter 1 **Introduction**

1.1 Statement of the investigation

This study bases its investigation on grounds derived from the context of the study itself as well as from literature. Contextually, the study aims to investigate the teachers' and learners' practices in a secondary school in Libya. In this context, education policy provides statements ensuring learners the rights to decide their learning modes and speciality. However, classrooms are sometimes imprinted by teacher-controlled environment and students sometimes seem to be forced to adopt passive roles, and receivers of knowledge transmitted to them by teachers to which the main goal is passing exams. From the literature about learner autonomy, the study investigates the claims that learner autonomy is restricted to certain cultures and is invalid in other cultures. Therefore, the study aims at exploring the context and living the experience amongst the participants. That is, through exploring the concept of autonomy in its 'social, political and cultural context' (Sinclair, 2000, p. 14).

1.1.1 Research questions

For the purpose of investigating the learners' and teachers' roles in teaching and learning, the learner-teacher relationships and their views and practices in relation to autonomous learning and through this the realisation of autonomy, the study poses the question: 'To what extent do teachers' and learners' perceptions of learning and teaching and their practices relate to the concept of learner autonomy in the Libyan context?' This question is broken down into sub-questions as follows:

1- How do teachers and learners perceive their roles in the learning process?

2- What type of relationship between learners and teachers is prevalent in the classroom and what affects it?

3- In the light of the Government regime change in Libya, are changes to classroom and learner-teacher relationships expected, and if there are any, are they related to any form of autonomy?

A theoretical contribution of the study is to try to find out if the claims that autonomy is inappropriate in some cultures can be confirmed or invalidated.

These questions are also divided to sub-questions presented in section 3.2.

1.1.2 Significance of the study

The study derives its significance from the fact that literature is short of studies that can provide insights from contexts that are assumed to be inappropriate to autonomy. The study of learner autonomy in relation to socio-cultural factors is lacking in the context of this study as well as in several contexts. Therefore, the study provides findings that are hoped to contribute to fill a gap in the literature through an in-depth investigation of the concept of autonomy in the Libyan socio-cultural context. The study can also demonstrate the importance and feasibility of facilitating learners to take more responsibility for their learning and providing them with the support that can be employed for allowing them to be more autonomous in their learning. It also stresses the importance of updating teachers' methods of teaching and drawing their attention to modern methods so they do not simply stay committed to old methods because of lack of awareness.

1.1.3 Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is divided into chapters starting with an introductory chapter about the context of the study: general information about Libya, the structure and aims of education, history of teaching English in the context, the place of English in the country and the nature of teaching and learning. The second chapter presents a literature review. This first section presents a background about the concept of autonomy, definitions, misconceptions about it, its origins in education, how autonomy is considered a goal and a means of education as well as different versions of autonomy. These are presented for maintaining understanding of this concept. The

second section of the second chapter provides an account of culture, the dimensions of culture, the types of culture and their validity or invalidity to account for teaching and learning and for learner autonomy in particular. The third section of the second chapter presents the relationship between autonomy and culture. The argument is about how autonomy is claimed an inappropriate, alien concept to some cultures. This section then presents an argument of the validity of autonomy to diverse cultures and the importance of collaboration and mediation in autonomy. The fourth section presents autonomy support and autonomy constrain practices from literature, the role of the teacher in autonomous learning, ways and techniques for instilling and fostering autonomy in learners including strategy training, adapting learners' beliefs and attitudes, raising their awareness and helping them to work actively and independently of teachers. Chapter three presents the methodology of the study. It presents the research paradigm of the study, the qualitative mode of inquiry used in this study, ethnographic methods to research, methods of data collection and analysis, trustworthiness procedures followed in the study, and presents procedures of gaining access and carrying out the field work in the context. Chapter four presents the analysis of teachers' and learners' accounts and perceptions of their roles and each other's roles, their understanding of autonomy and how they think this impinges on teaching and learning and what affects their beliefs. It then presents the participants' practices in their learning and teaching, how they learn and teach and how they build their relationships, how autonomy is manifested in their practices, and what constraints determine the implementation of their learning and teaching. This chapter then presents the general perceptions and views of the concept of autonomy in the context of the study and how education policy is built and implemented as well as any perceived change relating to learner autonomy in the context. Chapter five then concludes by presenting the findings of the study, how they fit in with models of learner autonomy in the literature, contribution of this study to knowledge, implications, limitations and recommendations of the study.

1.2 Context of the study

1.2.1 Introduction

The context in which learning takes place and the influence it can have in determining how learning and teaching are implemented is of high importance (Macaro, 1997; Nunan, 1997; Holliday, 1994). Therefore, this section of the thesis presents an overview of the context of the study: brief geographical, historical and political overviews as well as an account of education in the country of the study. This includes the historical development of education, the structure of education, a brief description of lessons and classrooms, and a review of the difficulties around teaching and learning English. It also presents the rationale and motivation for the study. Such a background is necessary to allow better understanding of the results that are obtained as well as may facilitate the transferability of the findings.

1.2.2 Macro context

1.2.2.1 The geography and history of Libya

Libya is an African country situated in the North of the continent and bordered by the Mediterranean Sea from the North, Tunisia and Algeria from the West, Egypt from the East and Chad, Niger and Sudan from the South. It has an area of 1.76 million square kilometres. The population of Libya is estimated at six million people (Jones, 2008).

Libya was conquered by the Arab Muslim leader Amr Ibn Al-aas in 642 C.E., about ten years after the death of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). Since then the Arabic language and Islam spread throughout the country and North Africa and became the official language and religion. In about 1551, Libya was occupied by the Ottoman Muslim Turks and was ruled by the Karamanlis. It remained under the Muslim Ottoman Empire until 1911 when the Italians invaded Libya and occupied it. After the victory of the Allies in the First World War, Libya was put under Italian sovereignty. In the late 1950s, great oil reserves were discovered in Libya. This changed the country from a poor agricultural country, dependent on aid from other

countries to a wealthy one. As a result, people had greater opportunities to receive education (Jones, 2008).

1.2.2.2 History of education in Libya

Libya has witnessed different eras of occupation and colonisation. Following independence in 1951, 81.1% of Libyans were illiterate and only 14 Libyans had university degrees. In spite of the poverty, a number of higher institutes were established; the University of Libya was established in 1955, two higher learning institutes in 1957, the college of Advanced Technology in 1961, and the college of Laws and the Muslim University in 1962 (Othman and Karleberg, 2007).

When the Italians occupied Libya in 1911 they neglected education and deprived Libyans of the right to appropriate education. Very few Libyans had the opportunity to attend schools at that time (Giffard, 1981). For most of the people, the only source they could appeal to was Kuranic schools, which taught Arabic language, Kuranic science and Islamic teachings. These schools— known as Zawaya or lodges— were also quite common during the Ottoman ruling. These lodges provided education and settlement and linked the economy of the country to that of Egypt. This neglect of education was partly attributed to the poverty the country suffered and an inability to secure proper education for the people (Ahmida, 2005). The 1951 constitution of Libya stated that education is a right for all citizens, made elementary education compulsory for both sexes, and made elementary and primary education free in public schools. The education system has witnessed considerable advances since independence: numbers of students and schools rose considerably and the length of the compulsory stage has increased to nine years (St John, 2006, p. 61).

After the 1969 revolution, education was directed more towards consolidating Arab nationalism and distancing Libya from Westernisation. Also, Gifffard (1981) notes that Gaddafi boasted that 'ignorance will end when... knowledge is extended to all people in a way which best suits them' (p. 11). However, what best suited people was Gaddafi's own or his supporters' preferences and decisions. For example, students were directed towards studying certain subjects according to their political reliability and their faithfulness to Gaddafi and his regime rather than to the students'

ability. Also, following the disinterest that students showed to Gaddafi's ideas, in 1980 a number of lectures which were relayed through closed-circuit television to students in Benghazi were distributed to students and compulsory exams were held on them (Giffard, 1981). Therefore, the 'unsettled conditions of Libyan higher education are the result... mainly of the political demands made by the regime' (Giffard, 1982, p. 12).

In the post-Gaddafi period, there have not been considerable changes so far apart from overthrowing parts of the materials that were directed towards instilling in students a sense of belonging to Gaddafi's thoughts and ideology. However, along with changes in the regime, it is very reasonable and likely that alterations in education policy and perhaps structure will take place in the coming years.

1.2.2.3 Structure of education

The education system in Libya has long been highly centralised with the General People's Committee for Education being the authority responsible for issuing policies. These policies were then executed by members of the People's Committees of Education in different municipalities (Mohamed, 1987).

The stages of education as adapted from Othman and Karlberg (2007) are as follows:

1. The preschool level: this level extends for 2 years for children aged 4-5 years old and is not mandatory. It aims to develop children's physical, mental and social capabilities.

2. The Basic Education Level: this level comprises three stages (see table 1). The first is the primary or basic level which extends for six years from age 6-11. The second stage is the three-year secondary (known more as preparatory) level and is for children aged 12 to 14. The third is the intermediate (secondary) or specialised level for 15-19 years old students and extends from 3 to 4 years. In this level, students can opt for a variety of disciplines such as economics, social science, basic science, engineering, etc. with special English language textbooks for each specialisation.

3. Higher Education: this level comprises the university level for 4-6 years, or higher institutes and technical centres which extend for 3 years. Upon finishing this level, students obtain either a B.A. or B.Sc. or vocational equivalent.

Stage	Age: from- to	Period of time
Preschool	4-5	2 years
Primary	6-11	6
Preparatory	12- 14	3 years
Secondary	15-19	3-4 years
Higher education	20-24 or 25 20-23	4-6 years for university; 3 years for higher institutes and technical centres

Table (1): Levels of school education

Al Moghani (2003) presents the specialisations at secondary school level which were put to use starting from the school year 2001/2002 as follows:

-Life sciences specialisation: this specialisation includes medical sciences and agricultural sciences.

-Engineering sciences: this includes architecture, mechanics, electricity and electronics, and natural sciences.

-Fine arts specialisation.

-Social sciences: under this branch fall Arabic language, Islamic studies, social sciences, and English language.

-Basic sciences: this comprises physics, mathematics, biology and chemistry.

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Social sciences and basic sciences attract the greatest numbers of students. After finishing their specialisation in secondary schools, students extend their studies in their chosen fields directly at university level.

In the following part, I present the aims of education in Libya.

1.2.2.4 Aims of education in Libya

It goes without saying that education is a basic foundation for any society. It is the means for development and prosperity and for people to thrive. According to Othman and Karleberg (2007), basic education in Libya is mandatory, and is financed by the government up to university level. The goals of education in Libya are summarised as follow. For preschool levels, the aims of education are:

-Providing an environment for developing children's personalities, for their freedom and encouraging in them creativity, independence and aptitude for self-dependence.

-Directing children's instinctive behaviour to something regular.

-Developing in children good habits through positive encouragement.

-Arousing children's curiosity for learning and helping them discover social phenomena suitable for their intellectual levels.

-Encouraging children's intelligence and developing their capabilities.

-Encouraging children's language and communication capabilities and sharpening their sense of beauty.

-Preparing children for formal education through developing their linguistic, social and behavioural skills.

-Developing children's spiritual and religious side.

The aims of basic education are:

-Preparing children for the environment to acquire necessary skills for true citizenship to enable them to take responsibility in their learning.

-Encouraging children's creative capabilities through respecting their intellectual and physical tendencies.

-Developing their mechanical and motor function and encouraging them to use their hands and senses.

-Helping them integrate into public life.

-Strengthening their cultural and religious values (Othman et al., 2007).

1.2.2.5 Languages in Libya

Arabic is the official language of Libya with different dialects spoken in different regions (Jones, 2008). Due to geographical closeness, the dialects of Tripolitania— the western region of the country, and Fezzan— the southern region, resemble dialects of the Maghreb- western parts of the Arab homeland. Cyrenaica dialects— spoken in the eastern part of Libya— are clearly influenced by the Egyptian, whereas the southern dialect is close to the Sudanese dialect (Azema, 2000). During the Italian colonisation of Libya, the Italian language was the language in schools, but it did not spread widely because only a small sector of Libyan people were allowed to attend schools (Azema, 2000). After the 1969 revolution, foreign languages were excluded from the education system for some time. The teaching of Italian had been prohibited for political reasons (Giffard, 1981).

1.2.2.6 English Language in Libya

The September 1969 revolution with anti-Western policy negatively influenced the learning and teaching of foreign languages. It ignited the war against the foreign presence where language was one of the most essential tools for this. Therefore, after the coup 'Qadhafi set about ridding the country of Western ''colonial'' influences: closing down the British and American bases as well as foreign cultural centres and libraries, and expelling thousands of the remaining Italian residents' (Jones, 2008, p. 66). In the early 1990s, English was almost completely banned and subjects in secondary schools were all in Arabic, including the sciences that have previously been taught in English (Azema, 2008).

Several factors have influenced the teaching of English. The material for teaching English employed in schools during the 1970s and 1980s was based on old fashioned method stressing rote learning activities rather than involving learners in thinking, reasoning and self-learning. Another factor that affected education at that period, especially English language teaching was a lack of well-qualified teachers. Azema describes the situation as: 'Rote learning remains strongly entrenched, reinforced by importing large numbers of poorly trained teachers from Egypt' (2000, p. 287). The focus was on grammar and reading comprehension. The use of the Direct Method, the Grammar Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method was a characteristic of English language teaching (Mohamed, 1987). Mohamed (1987) adds that the material used during the 1980s did not match the age of learners and that the 'content was trivial and unsuitable' (p. 131). Also, he points out that the material did not contain positive involvement of Islam or Arab history. This was a weakness in the material because it might have developed a stereotype towards English language being something associated only with the West.

In 1986, the United States bombed Tripoli and Benghazi, and as a reaction the Libyan authorities ordered that English teaching be stopped (Jones, 2008). This abrogation of teaching English from schools led to negative attitudes towards English. The mid-1990s witnessed the reintroduction of English language to secondary schools curriculum. However, this was through using the same old textbooks used previously during the 1980s. Around the year 2000, the old material was replaced by new textbooks based on Communicative Language Teaching. This new material was revolutionary compared to the previous resources. It is comprised of a series of books called English for Libya. Each book is divided into units providing activities for teaching vocabulary, grammar, functional use of language, listening, speaking and writing with different language activities and adopts communicative language teaching activities. Reading lessons require doing pre-reading, while reading and after reading activities and grammar is presented implicitly rather than explicitly, encouraging learners to discover rules for themselves. A wide range of vocabulary is presented and the use of the first language is advised to be kept to a minimum so students are encouraged to use the target language as much as possible. Teachers receive short training sessions from ELT

inspectors to implement the new curriculum. Lately, there seems to be some recognition of the importance of training teachers in implementing communicative language teaching and introducing modes of teaching and learning where students are active and responsible agents in their learning. Such training sessions, though appearing to be not extensive enough as there are only very few of them, signal the tendency of change in the preparation of teachers to teach in modern teaching methods. Such courses are normally organised either during the summer when students are on vacations or are short courses during school years.

1.2.2.7 Difficulties in teaching English in Libya

In both preparatory and secondary levels other than the English specialisation, English is allotted four periods a week with forty-five minutes for each period. As may be apparent, three hours a week would not suffice for teaching English and covering all the different skills and activities (Ghenghesh, 2005). Educational authorities usually suggest a solution not by devoting extra periods but by expelling parts of the material, announcing that these parts would not be included in the exam. The material for teaching English in Libya prior to the textbooks used currently was roundly criticised. Elhensheri (2004) quotes criticisms by UNESCO Mission (1994) in which the syllabus was described to have failed to provide 'specific objectives for each skill, mention of the ideas and functions that the grammatical functions imply, statements about vocabulary load and content, descriptions of situational and cultural context, guidance on evaluation and testing' (p. 43). Moreover, Elhensheri (2004) claimed that according to the UNESCO Mission (1994):

> English language courses lack the individualization of EFL learning which is reflected in the fact that a large proportion of students, by definition, cannot keep up with a modest pace designed for those of average ability and soon fall far behind, learning only to hate the subject (p. 44).

This absence of individualisation together with having English as a compulsory subject produces school graduates lacking efficient knowledge of English. The

UNESCO Mission (1994) saw this as the greatest reason for low levels among learners of English in Libya (Elhensheri, 2004).

Other difficulties that cause low levels in EFL in general are the inadequately trained teachers. Teachers who received education and training through expository modes would find it difficult to follow roles of counsellors and facilitators with their learners (Little, 1991). Therefore, such teachers normally follow the way they were taught. Also, exam-oriented teaching is a concern for all parties: students, parents and school authorities. The main concern mostly is passing exams, regardless of whether benefit has been obtained. An example of this is the absence of testing the speaking and listening skills. Moreover, Dihmani, (2001, cited in Ghenghesh, 2005) states that recent studies which covered different areas in Libya showed that in secondary level classrooms, teachers do not use the Communicative Approach in teaching English. Also, major features of classroom were the use of the first language and teacher-centeredness. Elhensheri (2004) adds another factor as presented by Shebani (1963) where it is claimed that by being highly centralised, with the Minister of Education on the top, education failed to fulfil advancements in reform. This hierarchical system controls everything about education including what is to be taught and how, as well as the roles of teachers and students.

1.2.2.8 The Educational culture in Libya

According to Aldabbus (2008), teaching in the context of this study is a process of the teacher dominating the classroom, asking questions, selecting students to answer and demonstrating examples on the board for students to follow. The teacher is seen as an authority whose role is to transfer knowledge to students. It is impolite and unacceptable to interrupt or disagree with teachers. Moreover, teachers are expected to know everything, so allowing learners to ask questions might result in embarrassment for teachers. Therefore, teachers may not allow learners to ask questions. Students are seated in rows listening dutifully to the teacher; if the teacher asks a question students raise their hands to answer and the teacher chooses one student to answer. Teachers sometimes doubt the usefulness of communicative teaching and prefer teaching large amounts of vocabulary and grammar rules for

students to memorise (Aldabbus, 2008). The situation can be portrayed by Brown's (2007) description of language teaching in the past as follows: 'Students entered a classroom, sat down dutifully in their desks, and waited for the teacher to tell them what to do. Those directives might have been to translate a passage, to memorize a rule, or to repeat a dialogue' (p. 130). Therefore, the most prominent reasons for the problems in teaching the English language in Libya might be attributed to the use of the Grammar Translation Method which leads to knowledge about language rather than knowledge of language, and lack of generally competent teachers who, even if provided, will be affected by other factors.

Moreover, the General Committee of Education (2008) pointed out that the Libyan teachers lag behind modern methods of teaching, and that the use of traditional methods and a focus on memorisation and recitation still imprint the Libyan education. Therefore, teachers are sometimes given teacher training courses. However, these courses are usually short and very few and only a small number of teachers are invited to attend them that their effects become minimal.

Secondary level English teaching material is designed to match students' specialisation and is full of vocabulary and texts that match different specialisations. These textbooks were introduced in 2002. They emphasise the learning of the four skills throughout and are suitable for employing Communicative Language Teaching. Cassettes for practising listening are provided and are an integral part of the material; language labs, however, are hardly found in schools. As an inherent tradition, teachers usually employ the old method that was used with the previous material. Classes are still marked by heavy use of first language and explicit explanation of grammar and other typical characteristics of the Grammar Translation Method. The new English language material has been prepared by specialists who are native speakers of English and is published by Garnet publications.

1.2.3 Micro context

The study is to be conducted in one secondary school in Misurata City, Libya. This city is situated on the coast 200 kilometres east of the capital, Tripoli. Secondary school level follows nine years of study: six years in primary school from age 6 to 11

years old, and three years in preparatory school from age 12 to 14 years old. The secondary level, from age 15 to 19 years, prepares students for admission to university. Average classrooms take about twenty to thirty students. Classes normally start at 8:30 and finish at around 2:30. The great majority of teachers are Libyans, and a B.A. is a precondition for teaching at secondary level.

In secondary schools, there are different specialisations: for example, economics, languages, arts and media, and social sciences. Students majoring in English study Arabic, computing, philosophy, sociology, Islamic education, and physical education as general subjects studied by the different specialisations. In their field, students of English study grammar, reading comprehension, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation.

The first and second year students take exams prepared by their teachers on the level of the one school; that is, each school prepares exams for its students. Sometimes, each class takes different exams from other classes because they are taught by other teachers. In the final year, students enter exams prepared by the Ministry of Education, which are at the same level throughout the country with unified timetables. Exam papers are assigned anonymous numbers and are marked by teachers who, therefore, do not know whose exam papers they are marking. In many cases, exam papers are exchanged between cities to be marked.

The reason behind choosing this level for the study is that students at secondary school level, aged 15 to 19, having passed the period of adolescence, are generally sufficiently aware of their needs and are able, with the aid of the teacher, to adopt the learning strategies that suit them best and enable them to learn more independently. Little (1991) proposes that autonomy should be fostered in learners as soon as it is possible (p. 46). However, he argues that: 'By the time [learners] reach third-level education, some learners have formed such a rigid view of what learning entails' (p. 47). Still, I would argue that it is more feasible and appropriate that autonomy be fostered at the secondary level, or earlier, and that learners at the secondary level are capable to express their views, preferences and inclinations in learning and in their relationships with teachers. This is in line with Benson (2000, p. 115) who asserts

that: 'The earlier learners begin to participate in decisions about their learning, the more capable of exercising autonomy they will be'.

1.2.4 Motivation for the study

The study derives motivation mainly from my own experience in the context. Through being a student and later a teacher for about ten years at preparatory, secondary and university levels, I have noticed that teachers tend to dominate the classroom and perform the teaching process. Sometimes, it has been an atmosphere of transferring what is in the textbooks to the students by the teacher. The students in turn memorise and reproduce what they have learnt from a typically exam-oriented teaching. Students sometimes learn not for the sake of learning and acquiring knowledge, but for the sake of passing exams set by the teacher or the Education Secretariat (Shihiba, 2011; Orafi and Borg, 2009; Aldabbus, 2008). This seems to be a tradition inherited from one generation to another, stereotyping the role of the teacher as a performer of teaching and the student as a mere receiver of knowledge. Still, this does not imply that autonomous learning is inappropriate in the context of this study. Rather, the modes of teaching and learning being followed might be seen as appropriate to teachers and learners and therefore they keep following them.

Another motive for carrying out this research is that the relationship between autonomous learning and communicative language teaching is a tight and close one and learner autonomy is an important aspect of communicative language teaching (Allwright and Hanks, 2009). The Communicative Learner-centred Approach has been aimed for through introducing new English language curricula around the year 2000, however it faced individual, contextual and cultural considerations that limited its successful implementation (Shihiba, 2011). In this regard, because teachers are used to employing traditional teaching methods such as the Grammar Translation Method (Elhensheri, 2004), Shihiba (2011) points out that Libyan teachers hold what they falsely consider to be misconceptions that considerably limit the implementation of communicative language teaching. Among what teachers consider misconceptions are free learning, empowering students and giving less authoritative role to teachers, and their lack of understanding of and inability to implement this approach. On the

part of students, Shihiba (2011) identifies a number of points such as students' lack of understanding of the role of learners in the learner-centred classroom, their over-concern about exams and perceiving their roles as passive, reticent learners. For me, the students' reliance on the teacher was most evident at the university level not because they are more dependent, but because I did not expect that they would be almost similar to students at the primary or secondary levels.

Further to this, in the literature about autonomy it is sometimes suggested that autonomy is not valid in some cultural contexts and is only appropriate in Western cultures, and that its spread is an attempt to universalise a Western construct (e.g. Pennycook, 1997). However, autonomy 'can be viewed as a concept which accommodates different interpretations and is universally appropriate, rather than based solely on Western, liberal values' (Sinclair, 2000, p. 13), and it 'can manifest itself in a great variety of ways. This is because the freedoms it entails are always conditional and constrained by the various factors that determine the context in which it arises' (Little, 1990, p. 10). This means that this freedom is not absolute and can come by degrees or be relative, i.e. autonomy 'is not an all-or-nothing concept' (Nunan, 1997, p. 192). Therefore, this study aims to identify what form autonomy takes and what constraints might affect its realisation in the context of this study.

1.2.5 Rationale for the study

The study mainly aims to understand teachers' and learners' ways and methods in learning and teaching through investigating their views and practices in the light of autonomous learning. Education policy in Libya contains several references aiming to allow learners freedom in learning such as emphasis on making basic education free at public education institutions, making secondary education optional, developing free education systems, techniques and programs that offer learners opportunities to study what they prefer, creating new patterns of teaching and learning, updating teaching methods, and stressing individuals' free choices of their fields of study (The General People's Committee of Education, 2008). However, after students finish their schooling and move to higher levels, they do pass exams but they seem to be unable to proceed with learning without formal instruction and

they seem unable to manage their learning perhaps because they have been used to instruction by teachers. The reason for this perceived mismatch between the aims of education and the real situation on the ground could be that 'learning strategies developed by the learner are usually deeply rooted in the learner's cognitive repertoire' or they could be 'by-products of a set of cultural and educational factors' (Dhaif, 1985, p. 224).

Moreover, Esch (2009) and Smith and Ushioda (2009) argue that for autonomy to be made sense of or developed at all, it needs to be looked at and understood in relation to local settings so that it could be made open to wider interpretations and practices in different contexts (see parts 2.4.3 and 2.4.4). Therefore, one rationale for this study is to see the realisation of autonomy in the context of the study and what impinges on it.

Another rationale draws on the literature about autonomy. Holliday (2003) shows that it seems that it is 'teacherly constructs of the 'learner'' rather than 'culturist stereotypes' that are responsible for the status quo (p. 126). That is, charges sometimes linked to cultural inappropriateness of autonomy might be invalid in the context of this study. Thus, it is the students' lack of independence from teachers' control that is prevalent in classrooms in Libya (Shihiba 2011; Elhensheri, 2004), and the role that learner autonomy might play in teaching and learning that ignited in me the idea of investigating this topic and carrying out this project. Moreover, the relationship between autonomous learning and communicative language teaching is a tight and close one and learner autonomy is an important aspect of communicative language teaching (Allwright and Hanks, 2009). The Communicative Approach has in the last ten years or so been introduced into the classrooms in Libya (Orafi and Borg, 2009). Therefore, the purpose of looking at whether autonomy exists and at its appropriate realisation in the context of this study might be exploited for employing an appropriate methodology and emphasising the positive role that learner autonomy may have on teaching and learning as autonomy is said to facilitate and contribute to efficient language learning (e.g. Benson, 1997; Nunan, 1997).

Therefore, this study aims to investigate teachers' and learners' perceptions, practices and roles in teaching, learning and the relationships between them. This is

in order to gain an understanding of how they carry out learning and teaching and what forms of autonomy are prevalent in the context of the study. This research has the advantage of being both focused on and addressing teachers and educators in the context of the study; therefore, results could be of benefit as they might be easily accessible and may well be taken seriously.

For this purpose, the study mainly addresses the following questions:

1- How do teachers and learners perceive their roles in the learning process?

2- What type of relationship between learners and teachers is prevalent in the classroom and what affects it?

3- In the light of the Government regime change in Libya, are changes to classroom and learner-teacher relationships expected, and if there are any, are they related to any form of autonomy?

Through investigating these questions the study also tries to show if charges of the inappropriateness of autonomy to some cultures are confirmed or invalidated (These questions are detailed in section 3.2).

The model I employed for investigation and analysis is Oxford's (2003) four-fold model: the technical perspective with focus on the physical situation; the psychological perspective focusing on the characteristics of learners; the socio-cultural perspectives I and II with focus on mediated learning; and the political-critical perspective which focuses on ideologies, access, and power structure. I employed this model as a framework for approaching the concept of learner autonomy in this context because it seems to cover different dimensions of autonomy, different modes of control, and, most particularly for this study, it recognises the mediation and collaboration aspects of autonomous learning as well as allows for the diversity of autonomy rather than confines it to certain contexts. I also used this model here in order to present a fair account that neither conceals aspects of autonomy that are present in the context nor employs a framework that might be biased to present the context as an ideal land for autonomy.

1.2.6 Positionality

This study employs ethnographic methods of research. In this, it is necessary that the researcher makes explicit his/her stance and shows clearly who he/she is, what role he/she has and how it might affect the surroundings in the research: this is called positionality (Wellington, 2000).

In this part, I present some background on myself as a teacher. I have taught at different levels; preparatory, secondary and university levels. In my career as a teacher in these different levels, I have often tried to create to my students the atmosphere which provides them with space in which they could manoeuvre (Jiménez Raya, Lamb, and Vieira, 2007), rather than confine work on lessons to myself. When I allowed learners spaces to work on their learning and take responsibility for it, the results were considerably different to the degree that there were almost two extremes. Sometimes, learners were almost completely passive, silent and dependent on me for providing them with knowledge which they seldom wanted for the purpose of acquiring knowledge but for passing exams. Such cases sometimes made me tentative in sacrificing more class time to indulge learners in working on their lessons. At the other extreme, there were cases where students were ready even before being invited to be in control of their learning. This means that the issue of students taking responsibility for their learning is not alien in the context of this study. These experiences made me question the passivity and dependence on teachers that some students exhibited in their learning. Till I had the opportunity to carry out this study, I sometimes envisaged the mode of teaching and learning where learners are active partners in learning to be inappropriate and unsuccessful in the context of my career, Libya.

In my belief, investigating modes of teaching and learning and perceptions of teachers and learners require being part of their work and listening to them, rather than quantifying the recurrence of certain actions. Therefore, I opted to approach the context and carry out the investigation in this study through qualitative approach to research employing ethnographic methods. In this, I could obtain deeper insights into the context and the learners' and teachers' interpretations of their learning and

teaching and to validate expectations and refute doubts I have always held about learners' and teachers' roles. Through this, I could integrate myself in the context of the case study and have rich data that could not be obtained otherwise. The findings of this research were unsurprising in general as I have always had the impression that modes of teaching and learning where learners take responsibility and active roles can be accommodated in the context of my study, particularly that such modes can take diverse forms and degrees.

1.3 Summary

This chapter presented a background of the context where the study was carried out. It presented the research questions and the significance of the study. It also presented how the thesis is organised to facilitate following the order of its parts. This chapter then proceeded to present the context of the study on two levels. The macro level presented an outline of the geography and history of Libya. Then it presented an explanation of the education system through outlining its structure and aims. It also presented a background of the English language and the difficulties that face its teaching in Libya. The chapter then turned to present an outline of the micro context where the study has been conducted, that is a secondary school. The chapter also presented the motivation and rationale behind carrying out the study, and then concluded with presenting a part about positionality.

Chapter 2 **Literature Review**

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided to a number of sections. The first section presents a background about the concept of autonomy: its definition, its origins, its development in language education, how it is sometimes considered as a means or goal, and versions of autonomy. The second section presents a definition of culture and its divisions. The third brings together the two concepts of autonomy and culture and explains how autonomy relates to culture and how autonomy is sometimes considered alien to some cultures as well as argues for the validity of autonomy to different cultures emphasising the role of collaboration and social aspects of learning. The fourth section then argues for how autonomy can be fostered through focusing on ways and techniques to support autonomy, and constraints that might hinder its development. It also discusses the role of the teacher in enhancing learner autonomy and helping learners to adopt autonomous roles, outlines the importance of learner strategies that can be employed to enable learners adopt more responsible roles, discusses the importance of supporting learners in reflecting on their existing attitudes and beliefs through raising their awareness of their potential roles as active, responsible learners as well as how learners can be encouraged to be responsible for their learning.

2.2 Autonomy: Origins and definitions

2.2.1 Introduction

In this section, I provide a background on the concept of learner autonomy: provide definitions of autonomy and what autonomy is not, trace its origins in language education, justify from literature why learner autonomy can be set as a goal and/or a means in education, and provide some discussion of different versions of autonomy

that show the diversity of the concept which facilitate understanding how autonomy might be appropriate in different contexts. Benson (2007) proposes that: 'Research aimed at the definition of autonomy in learning is important for the simple reason that, if we are to foster autonomy, we need to know what it is that we are trying to foster' (p. 736).

As autonomy is the principal piece of the whole picture, its definitions are presented here along with its development and its versions, its roots as well as its versatility for facilitating understanding this concept. However, before I proceed to defining and clarifying autonomy and tracing its germination, I need to draw a distinction between the terms autonomy and independence which I would not tend to consider synonymous for the following reasons. Benson (2010) notes that 'autonomous learning is not exactly the same thing as freedom from the influence of teachers, institution, materials and so on, or learning by oneself' (p. 80). That is, while independence may ignore constraints in referring to autonomous behaviour, autonomy takes these constraints as undeniable factors which may affect the degree or the realisation of autonomy but do not necessarily constrain it. Moreover, Benson (2011) argues that the use of independence as a synonym to autonomy makes dependence an opposite to autonomy which makes autonomy refer to complete independence. In addition, independence has individualistic connotations which resulted in a focus on interdependence as a form of learners' collaboration in learning and sharing of responsibility (Palfreyman, 2003) because individualism might lead to confirming the inappropriateness of autonomy to some cultures. These misconceptions can therefore raise the problem of denying the social aspects of autonomy. That is, using independence as a synonym to autonomy would enforce the criticism of autonomy being referring to working without the aid of others or in isolation of others. Therefore, I would take autonomy more broadly than independence to refer not to capacity or ability to work on one's own learning in isolation, as independence implies, but to working with as well as in collaboration with others and maybe solely (cf. 2.2.2.1 and Little, 1990 for the misconception that autonomy means learners working independently of teachers).

In the early 1990s, autonomy was considered to be a 'buzz word' (Little, 1991, p. 2) in education and language education in particular and is occupying greater space in the literature of language education (Benson and Voller, 1997) and even more since then. Etymologically, the word autonomy is derived from the Greek word 'autonomos', made up of 'auto', which refers to the self and 'nomos' which means to rule or direct oneself (Zembylas and Lamb, 2008), and was originally a political concept which was later transferred to the ethical and educational domain (Zembylas et al., 2008).

In the following part, I review different definitions and origins of learner autonomy in order to establish an understanding of the concept. This comprehensive survey is necessary for understanding autonomy and establishing a basis for understanding how it might be realised in different cultural contexts.

2.2.2 Definitions of autonomy

This part aims not to provide one specific definition but to present a number of widely accepted and debated definitions from the literature about the concept of autonomy. Because 'autonomy refers to the learner's broad approach to the learning process, rather than to a particular mode of teaching or learning' and because autonomy is 'multidimensional and takes different forms in different contexts of learning', researchers agree on some issues and disagree on others and 'often agree to disagree' (Benson, 2011, p.1). Therefore, although autonomy as a concept may seem simple at first glance, it is difficult to find a conclusive and comprehensive definition for it (Sinclair, 2008). As Jiménez Raya et al. (2007) state: 'defining learner autonomy in a formal education context is not an easy task because of the complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept' (p. 29). Macaro (1997), commenting on autonomy, states that: 'Like CLT, the roots of autonomy lie in a number of cultures and, as a consequence, it has been subjected to a number of different interpretations and definitions' (p. 167).

In the context of education, Holec's definition is widely cited. Holec defines autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (1979, p. 3). This definition appears in much of the learner autonomy literature perhaps because of its

inclusiveness and the leeway it provides for different aspects requisite for autonomy such as the teacher, the learner, the context, etc. Holec (1979) suggests that taking charge of one's own learning means or requires being responsible for and having control over attitudes towards and elements of learning, thus: 'determining the objectives'; 'defining the contents and progressions'; 'selecting methods and techniques to be used'; 'monitoring the procedure of acquisition'; and 'evaluating what has been acquired' (Holec, 1979, p. 4). Holec's definition underlies that learners control their learning process, and are responsible for it through assigning the aims for their learning, contributing to choosing material, reflecting on the method used, and assessing their progress. Hence learners fulfil the most basic elements of autonomous learning in which they become active participants rather than mere listeners. Littlewood (1996) refers to 'an autonomous person as one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions' (p. 428). Similarly, for Little (1991): 'autonomy is a capacity— for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular type of psychological relation to the process and content of the learning' (p. 4). What is vital here is what that capacity involves. According to Littlewood (1996), this capacity requires learners to possess ability and willingness. It is noteworthy here that ability does not necessarily refer to absence of constraints or complete freedom. Benson (2011) notes that Little's (1991) definition covers what Holec missed: 'the cognitive capacities underlying effective self-management of learning' (p. 60). He adds, however, that both Holec and Little miss an important component of autonomous learning, which is the control over the content of learning, although he (2011, p. 61) does concede that a definition of autonomy that seeks to cover all aspects of control over learning would be too long and impractical. Therefore, for him (2011, p. 2): 'Autonomy can be broadly defined as the capacity to take control over one's learning', bringing together the two potentially mostly used and basic aspects of control over learning which are 'capacity' and 'taking control'. Benson (2010) asserts that using 'control' to define autonomy facilitates its observability because control is associated with observable behaviours.

Although the previous definitions are largely accepted in the literature on autonomy, they might be accused of not addressing learning as a social activity and the importance of socialisation for autonomous learning. Socialisation in learning can provide an appropriate atmosphere for autonomy and lead to motivation on the part of the learner both in educational and social contexts (Benson, 1996; Little, 1996; 1991; Boud, 1988). In addition, Littlewood (1999) emphasises aspects of autonomy that directly affect language learning. Therefore, he proposes the need for a broad definition which reflects and accommodates the needs of different learners in different contexts, a definition that includes 'people's needs to feel not only autonomous but also part of a social network' (p.74), rather than a definition that imposes alien concepts on certain learners. In this regard Benson (1996) suggests: 'Greater learner control over the learning process, resources and language cannot be achieved by each individual acting alone according to his or her own preferences. Control is a question of collective decision-making rather than individual choice' (p. 33).

Later in this chapter, I bring to focus the need for addressing the social aspects of learning in defining and cultivating learner autonomy. In the following part, I present some misconceptions about autonomy prevalent in the literature which can help illustrate what autonomy is or is not.

2.2.2.1 What autonomy is not

There are some misconceptions about autonomy in the literature. Little (1999) proposes that autonomy does not mean enforcing learners to follow a certain way of learning. Breen and Mann (1997) assert that autonomy is not a process that learners can learn nor is it rules or strategies which are followed, '[r]ather autonomy is seen as a way of being in the world; a position from which to engage with the world' (p. 134). They add that autonomy is not present only in the classroom context, constrained by or only existing in the learner-teacher relationship, but rather it stretches beyond the classroom to different aspects of learners' lives.

Little (1990) presents 'five negatives' detailing what learner autonomy is not. Firstly, he points out that autonomy is not synonymous with self-instruction, i.e. autonomy is

not restricted to working independently of the teacher. This assertion might be validated on two grounds. On the one hand, Little (1991) proposes that this presents a misconception that entails learners working independently from the teacher. That is, autonomy is not 'a matter of deciding to learn without a teacher' (Little, 1991, p. 3). On the other hand, self-instruction ideally follows and should be set as an outcome of autonomy, thus, self-instruction is more a goal of autonomy than a synonym for it. Rivers (2001) puts it as: 'Autonomy is a prerequisite for self-directed language learning' (p. 286). Secondly, the teacher is not neglected or denied his/ her role in the classroom, but learning is a matter of imitation and negotiation where the teacher as well as the learner is involved. Thirdly, although the teacher is a part of the learning process, he should not be the main character in the classroom nor dictate to the learners what they should do in order to be autonomous. This brings to light the misconception that any type of intervention by the teacher is considered a violation of learners' autonomy and may destroy it. Fourthly, autonomy is not a specified or specific behaviour that learners can follow and thus be considered autonomous, i.e. 'Autonomy can manifest itself in a great variety of ways' (Little, 1990, p. 10). Fifthly, autonomy is not a situation which learners maintain, rather it can be manifested by degrees and learners can be autonomous in different ways according to their individual needs, age and wants as well as for different personalities.

For Dearden (1972), an autonomous person does not necessarily follow completely original or new opinions or practices. However, the old opinions or practices an autonomous person might follow should reflect his/ her own creativity, understanding and choice. Dearden (1972) states that:

> there is no necessity that an autonomous person should be
> uncooperative, should refuse to follow any ordinary conventions or
> should reject all forms of authority. There is no reason at all why
> any of these must be unacceptable, in advance of our knowing in
> which direction a person wishes to exercise his autonomy (p. 338).

Although mapping out what autonomy is not does not provide a straightforward definition of autonomy, it distances this concept from fallacies that may be attached to it in the course of advocating it and proclaiming its universality. However, we

should not be restrained by finding a definition for the consensus but should work on finding valid forms of autonomy in different contexts through being 'sensitive and open to individual circumstances and contexts', as well as learning to 'listen to our learners' (Lamb, 2005, p. 83).

In this part, I have presented definitions of autonomy as well as misconceptions about it to remove ambiguities over what autonomy does not refer to, in order to provide an understanding of this concept. In accordance with this argument, I later present an argument about the place of socialisation in the definitions of autonomy and try to demonstrate the importance of collaboration for autonomy. In the following part, I try to trace the origins of the concept of autonomy in general then more specifically its origin in language education.

2.2.3 Origins of autonomy

In this part, I outline the development of learner autonomy through the works of some philosophers and educationalists in whose works the constructivist and social constructivist theories of language learning are present, and discuss how (social) constructivist theory and critical theory have mainly addressed the teacher-student relationship and contributed to the development of autonomy. I intend to review the constructivist and social constructivist theories of learning in the first place because supporters of autonomous language learning pull away from promoting individualistic approaches to learning through adopting and emphasising the feasibility of collaborative approaches reflected in the growing trend towards social and critical approaches to learning. This trend is evident in works of educationalists such as Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Gramsci and Althusser (Benson and Voller, 1997, pp. 6-7). I start here with a brief review of some theories of learning, argue the inability of some theories to account for autonomy and thus provide justification for the focus on constructivist and social constructivist theories.

Positivism maintains that knowledge is an accurate reflection of objective— discovered and taught— reality (Lamb and Reinders, 2005). Knowledge according to this theory of learning takes one of two forms: knowledge can simply be transferred from one individual (e.g. teacher) to another individual or individuals

(e.g. learners) in the form of filling students' heads with knowledge by the teacher. Knowledge may also be discovered through hypothesis-testing. That positivism 'strongly supports 'teacher-learner' models of learning' (Benson, 1997, p. 23), it tends to make learning exclusive to the classroom. This theory is therefore insufficient to support the notion of preparing individuals for life-long learning which is an aspiration of autonomous learning. Critical theory, on the other hand, sees the learning process as engagement and integration in the social context, with a critical look to social relationships (Benson, 1997). Although it perceives knowledge to be constructed rather than acquired, critical theory tends to greatly emphasise the social context and constraints in which learning takes place.

The constructivist theory bringing the individual to the centre of focus has evolved as a reaction to the behaviourist theory of learning. Fosnot and Perry (2005) define it as a theory of learning that:

> construes learning as an interpretive, recursive, nonlinear building process by active learners interacting with their surround—the physical and social world. It is a psychological theory of learning that describes how structures, language, activity, and meaning-making come about, rather than one that simply characterizes the structures and stages of thought, or one that isolates behaviours learned through reinforcement (p. 34).

Constructivism in education is grounded mainly in the cognitive works of Piaget and social constructivism is rooted in Vygotsky's work on socio-culturalism (von Glasersfeld, 2005; Reagan, 1999). Reagan (1999) argues that there is no agreement on whether constructivism is 'best understood as an epistemology, an educational philosophy, a pedagogical approach, a theory of teaching, or a theory of learning' (p. 414). Constructivism is sometimes seen as an epistemology which 'entails the rejection of traditional transmission-oriented views of learning, as well as behaviorist models of learning. Instead, emphasis is placed on the individual learner's construction of his or her knowledge' (Reagan, 1999, p. 414). Therefore, knowledge is created and contributed to by learners rather than transferred to them by teachers. Also, learners are co-creators of knowledge by working with each other

and with the teacher. Constructivism is also considered a theory about learning (Fosnot et al., 2005; von Glasersfeld, 2005; Reagan, 1999), where students are active constructors of knowledge and they carry out their learning by themselves where teachers are providers of opportunities and motives for students to build up their knowledge (von Glasersfeld, 2005). In this, the main goal of constructivist epistemology in education is 'helping teachers to learn to empower students to acquire language more effectively' (Reagan, 1999, p. 421). Literature emphasises that constructivism is not a theory of teaching and no '''cookbook teaching style'' or pat set of instructional techniques can be abstracted from the theory and proposed as a constructivist approach to teaching' (Fosnot et al., 2005, p. 33).

Fosnot et al. (2005) present a number of principles of constructivism. These show how learners are seen as active creators of knowledge and teachers as facilitators and providers of incentives for learners:

- Learning is not the result of development; learning is development. It requires invention and self-organization on the part of the learner. Thus, teachers need to allow learners to raise their own questions, generate their own hypotheses and models as possibilities, test them out for viability, and defend and discuss them in communities of discourse and practice.
- ...''Errors'' need to be perceived as a result of learners' conceptions, and therefore not minimized or avoided. Challenging, open-ended investigations in realistic, meaningful contexts need to be offered which allow learners to explore and generate many possibilities, both affirming and contradictory....
- Reflective abstraction is the driving force of learning. As meaning makers, humans seek to organize and generalize across experiences in a representational form....
- Dialogue within a community engenders further thinking. ... The learners (rather than the teacher) are responsible for defending, providing, justifying, and communicating their ideas to the classroom community. Ideas are accepted as truth only insofar as

they make sense to the community and thus they rise to the level of ''taken-as-shared'' (pp. 33-34).

It becomes clear, therefore, that constructivism maintaining learners' roles as active, agent creators of knowledge and teachers as helpers is a theory that accounts for the way people develop as learners.

Two versions of constructivism are prominent in the field of education; social constructivism, rooted in Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, and radical constructivism that emerged from Piaget's cognitive development theory (Reagan, 1999). The difference between the two lies in that social constructivism denotes the construction of knowledge in a socio-cultural context and knowledge is therefore constructed socially rather than individually, whereas radical constructivism refers to the construction of knowledge individually by learners (Reagan, 1999). Similarly, Young and Collin (2004) differentiate between constructivist and social constructivist theories in that the 'former focuses on meaning making and the constructing of the social and psychological worlds through individual, cognitive processes while the latter emphasizes that the social and psychological worlds are made real (constructed) through social processes and interaction' (p. 373). Therefore, constructivism focuses on individualistic approaches and lacks reference to social interaction (Young et al., 2004). This shows the similarity between constructivism and radical constructivism. This distinction qualifies social constructivism to account more appropriately as a base to collaboration in learner autonomy. However, Young et al. (2004) add that constructivism is used in 'a generic, or undifferentiated sense', and that some 'have used the two terms interchangeably' (378). For this reason, I use them interchangeably though drawing a distinction when required.

The reasons for focusing on constructivism here are that it is considered a foundation stone for autonomy (Esch, 1996, in Benson, 2011), that in the constructivist theory 'learning is seen as a socially mediated activity, since it provides a clear bridge between interpersonal and intrapersonal, showing that 'social' and 'individual' aspects of the learning process, far from being contradictory, are essentially similar' (Riley, 2003, p. 102). Moreover, 'within a

constructivist framework, learning itself is perceived as autonomous', in which '[o]ne of the basic tenets...is the encouragement and acceptance of learner autonomy and initiative' (Jiménez Raya et al., 2007, p. 28). Brown (2007) notes that according to constructivism the learners' role is to construct meaning where social instruction is emphasised. Also, an important premise of constructivism is that 'learning is an active process in which learners are active sense makers who seek to build coherent and organised knowledge' (Mayer, 2004, p. 14), and Holec's widely accepted definition of autonomy (see 2.2.2.) implies a constructivist view of autonomy (Murphy and Hurd, 2011). Moreover, Kinchin (2013) argues that in constructivist approaches, learners are not passive or reticent but are active participants, both individually and socially in acquiring knowledge through being encouraged to find their own ways and developing and constructing knowledge where autonomy and initiative of learners are accepted and supported. Moreover, Benson (2007) argues that in the constructivist theory of learning, knowledge that leads to change in the learners' system of meanings— which cannot be taught but is constructed through learners' participation in the learning process— is of a higher order than knowledge that leads to accumulation of facts. Derived from this is that:

> the genuinely successful learners are those who succeed in constructing the target language system as a system for the interpretation and communication of their own meanings, a process that necessarily involves some degree of control over management, acquisition, and content. Thus, if we assume that the goal of language teaching and learning is not simply the accumulation of facts and technical skills, autonomous language learning is, almost by definition, equivalent to effective language learning (Benson, 2007, p. 737).

This line of interest in collaboration and integration has paralleled the evolution of constructivist theory as learner autonomy is more consistent and congruent with this theory than other theories (Chan, Chin, and Suthiwan, 2011; Trebbi, 2008). Support for the closeness between (social) constructivism and collaboration in learning comes from essential principles of constructivism such as the importance of

participation on the part of the learner, process-orientedness and encouragement of reflective learning, and emphasis on using authentic texts and open-ended tasks (Chan and Chen, 2011). These are seen as consistent with autonomous learning, learner-centredness, and viewing learning as an active and interactive process (Chan, Chin, and Suthiwan, 2011), as well as looking at learning as an 'active, constructive, cumulative and goal-oriented activity' (Jiménez Raya and Lamb, 2008, p. 59).

The development of autonomy has been influenced by several philosophers and educationalists, such as Kelly, Kolb, Barnes, Vygotsky, Freire, and Rogers, amongst others (Benson, 2011). The works of these philosophers and thinkers contributed to autonomy basically by making prominent the ideals of and the emphasis of social constructivism and constructivism on granting learners responsibility and control in learning. One of the important ideals of these theories is that, as Trebbi (2008) argues, absolute freedom from constraints is not what autonomy is about and it is not a component of learner autonomy. Such philosophers argued in favour of allowing learners to take part in and share learning in order to be active agents in the process rather than simply recipients of knowledge. Benson (2011) points out that the seeds of autonomy in learning are evident in Rousseau's work. Rousseau (1712-78), in his 'Emile', argues that children should be left to decide what they want to learn, when they want to learn, and that they should learn through direct contact with nature and not by spoon feeding from teachers. Through such concepts, his work emphasises the development of individuals who control their learning, rather than controlled (Benson, 2011).

Philosophers such as Dewey (1859-1952) and Kilpatrick (1871-1965) were influenced by Rousseau's work. Dewey's work on education implies that it should not only be for mastering subjects but for preparing individuals to be active participants in social and political life (Benson, 2011). Dewey (1933) criticises the student-teacher relationship which makes 'the child a student of the teacher's peculiarities rather than of the subjects that he is supposed to study' (p. 61). This sort of relationship makes the student aspire to satisfy the teacher rather than work for the purpose of thinking, comprehending and reflecting on the subject matter, and

makes the student dependent on the teacher in his/her learning. Therefore, Dewey asserts that education should be employed for cultivating and fostering reflective thinking. The role of the teacher in Dewey's work is a facilitating and a guiding one, rather than an authoritative one.

Freire (1974) argues that humanity means being and integrating with others and acting critically. Human beings, argues Freire, should not be passive, but reflective and creative where they take part in and alter reality. Therefore, it is integration rather than adaptation to the world that makes humans transform reality and be reflective and this, in a sense, is therefore what makes them human. He points out: 'To be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world' (Freire, 1974, p. 3). When humans are not allowed to make their own decisions, behave in their own ways or act according to their will, they become incapable of integration, they rather adapt. They become objects rather than subjects. Freire (1974) also calls for empowering humans to allow them to work out their own decisions. Therefore, he (2005) strongly criticises the 'banking model' in which teachers are 'depositors' and the learners are 'depositories'. In this model, teachers know everything, talk, think, and transmit knowledge to learners who know nothing, do not talk, and are receivers of knowledge (Freire, 1974, pp. 72-73). Freire, rather, argues for dialogue through which:

> the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow (2005, p. 80).

In this process, the relationship between the teacher and students becomes one of negotiation, reflection and interaction. In this sense, Rogers (1983), building on findings from psychotherapy, argues for the applicability of building a relationship of interaction, interdependence, and sharing of control of the learning process between the teacher and the learners. He argues for allowing learners to take part in learning and that the teacher becomes a facilitator or guide.

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The importance of collaboration and group work for autonomy is evident in the literature through works of authors such as Benson (1996), Little (1996; 1991), and Boud (1988). An important contribution to the field of autonomy comes from Vygotsky through his Zone of Proximal Development theory (ZPD), where the emphasis on collaboration and integration in learner autonomy is linked to Vygotsky's ZPD (e.g. Schwienhorst, 2003). ZPD refers to 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). That is, according to ZPD, learners achieve higher and better levels through collaboration and interaction with more competent or experienced others than they achieve when working solely. In emphasising the importance of helping students, Mayer (2004) argues that guided discovery or teacher's help to students is more beneficial than pure discovery in which learners do not receive guidance from teachers because guided discovery helps students (a) activate existing knowledge or construct knowledge to use for making sense of new knowledge, and (b) integrate newly accumulated knowledge with appropriate existing knowledge. Little (1996) builds on Vygotsky's work that emphasises the importance of interaction in learning and points out that 'the development of a capacity for reflection and analysis, central to the development of learner autonomy, depends on the development and internalization of a capacity to participate fully and critically in social interactions' (p. 211).

In this regard, Little (2000) reminds us of the interdependent nature of development of autonomy through passing through dependence in order to arrive to independence where again individuals move back and forth between dependence and interdependence, or engagement and detachment (p.18). This interdependence in Vygotsky's ZPD and scaffolding notions refers to the more capable peer providing help and aid and integrating the less capable in working towards being an independent learner.

Therefore, the view of empowering learners and allowing them opportunities of collaboration and interaction in learning is an impetus for constructivist approaches

to learning. This shows the strong link between the constructivist and social constructivist theories and the tenets of learner autonomy in language learning. Therefore, the constructivist and social constructivist theories have been linked to the development of learner autonomy in this study.

In the following part, I review the development of autonomy in language education.

2.2.4 The development of autonomy in language education

In the last two or three decades learner autonomy or terms underpinning practices of autonomous learning in education and language education have been widely debated and have attracted many arguments from educationalists. I try here to look at how autonomy has entered the field of language education and how it developed in this field.

In 1972, Dearden referred to an aim of education which forms the quality of a person's personality over the course of formal schooling of children. This new aim was personal autonomy. Dearden (1972, p. 333) points out that autonomy in education is present in a number of practices and is referred to by a number of terms such as 'self-direction', 'self-activity', 'independence' and 'being a chooser'. He argues that at least in certain conditions children tend to want to be autonomous or favour this approach. Incidents counter to this assumption such as unhappiness or anxiety should be seen only as individual differences which would require an 'enquiry as to how the ideal might more effectively be realized' (p. 334). This new aim, personal autonomy, is not exclusive to educated people who are keen to have their own opinions. Rather, any person can have a distinct form of autonomy exercised in his/ her own activities or ways (Dearden, 1972).

Autonomy in language education was brought to discussion by Holec (1981) through a report on the Council of Europe's Modern Language Project which was established in 1971 (Benson, 2006). Gremmo and Riley (1995) specify a number of factors that contributed to the emergence and spread of autonomy in education. They consider the following as the most important:

1. The emergence of movements of minorities and their focus on education and learning.

2. The emphasis on importance of participation in learning and the emergence of communicative teaching as a reaction to behaviourism.

3. The development of technology and its provision and facilitation of learning.

4. The increase in demand for learning languages and the tendency in this to favour independent learning.

5. The commercialisation of language education which led to perceiving learners as active participants.

6. The great increase in numbers of learners reflected in greater demand, which in turn necessitated new methods of self-learning.

In addition, autonomy in education has gained widespread acceptance due to the success of a number of projects about autonomy in learning, the support from advocates of autonomy as a goal for education (Benson, 2011), perceiving autonomous learning as feasible and facilitating learning (Miller, 2009; Little, 1991), as well as designating autonomy as a goal of education (Boud, 1988). However, Benson (2009) argues that autonomy is essentially non-linguistic and alien to language education, and it is imported to the field of language teaching and learning from moral and political philosophy through psychology and educational theory.

For the purpose of looking at how autonomy is addressed in the field of language education, I now argue how autonomy is considered sometimes a goal of education and sometimes a means to more efficient learning.

2.2.5 Autonomy as a goal or means

This part looks at how autonomy is considered as a means and as a goal of language education. This survey is used here as an attempt to show the justification of

prevalence of autonomy in language education which can help understand the employability and acceptability of autonomy in diverse contexts.

The literature presents two main senses in this regard, autonomy as a means and as a goal. As Benson and Voller (1997) propose, autonomy can be referred to as a means to learn languages, or as an end of language learning in itself, i.e. 'autonomy for language learning' or 'language learning for autonomy' (p. 2). They add that assigning autonomy as a goal of education where the purpose is to create an individual who is the core of a democratic society is a radical goal. Personal autonomy has long been seen as a goal of education to develop individuals who can participate in developing their societies (Jiménez Raya et al., 2007; Benson, 2007, 2000; Benson and Voller, 1997), and to develop in individuals the ability to make decisions regarding their thoughts and practices (Boud, 1988). This eligibility of autonomy as an aim for education has been defended by several educationalists such as Jiménez Raya et al. (2007), Benson (2000), Esch (1996), Cotterall (1995a), and Boud (1988). Legutke and Thomas (1991) justify the importance of setting lifelong learning and learning beyond structured learning environments as a goal of education as follows:

> No school or university can provide its students with all the knowledge and skills needed to deal with the requirements and challenges of their adults lives. For this it is imperative that when leaving their formal educational experience, students are equipped to continue learning beyond school without the help of teachers and a specifically structured learning environment (p. 270).

Autonomy as a goal has been justified on several grounds: ideological which states that 'the individual has the right to be free to exercise his or her own choices, in learning as in other areas, and not become a victim (even an unwitting one) of choices made by social institutions' (Crabbe, 1993, p. 443). On economic grounds, Crabbe (1993) argues that society cannot provide instruction for all its members, especially with the increasing demand for education and training, so members of society must find ways to cater for their own needs by taking on their learning, either individually or cooperatively, rather than learning being exclusive to

institutions (pp. 443-444). Also on economic grounds, McDevitt (1997) points out that in the cost-cutting and accountability terms of modern society, learner-centeredness is becoming a necessity. McDevitt (1997) states that, 'the end-product of all education should be an independent learner' (p. 34). Hence education that does not lend support to developing independence in learners will be deemed short of fulfilling its goals and is deficient. Therefore, McDevitt (1997) reasserts that 'autonomy must be viewed as an end-goal and not an approach' (p. 34). On practical grounds, Cotterall (1995a) states that learners do not always have access to help from the teacher, so they need to learn how to learn without the teacher; and on moral grounds, Candy (1988) sees autonomy as a right of individuals to issue their own decisions, to take part in learning or not and to be listened to. Benson (2000, p. 114) stresses the importance of autonomy as a goal of education more strongly: 'without autonomy our lives are less than human'. The argument of defending autonomy as a goal of education can be summarised in Little's (1999) words:

> If the potential for autonomy is a human universal and the purpose of education is to help learners to develop tools for critical reflection, it follows as a matter of principle that learner autonomy is an appropriate pedagogical goal in all cultural settings (p. 15).

Literature also presents support to considering autonomy as a means to better, more effective learning. In the literature it is clearly evident that autonomous learning leads both to greater motivation and to more effective learning (e.g. Benson, 2000). Moreover, Boud (1988) argues that autonomy is used to denote a method which emphasises instilling in students responsibility and decision-making, which lead to better, more efficient learning; that is, 'all genuinely successful learning is in the end autonomous' (Little, 1994, p. 431). In this sense, Boud (1988) stresses the importance of integrating autonomy in learning and the salience of autonomy for effective and collaborative learning. On psychological grounds, Crabbe (1993) argues that autonomous learners are better in learning which becomes 'more meaningful, more permanent, more focused' (p. 443). In the philosophical justification, Cotterall (1995a) justifying autonomy as means to learning notes that

learners have rights to make choices about their learning; on pedagogical grounds she refers to the efficiency of learning when learners have control over their learning; and Candy (1988) asserts that learning becomes more effective when learners have their own opinions on learning and deciding what, how and when to learn.

The next part provides an argument of versions of autonomy which shows that it has different realisations probably making it sufficiently flexible to match needs and requirements of different learners as well as different contexts.

2.2.6 Versions of autonomy

Discussion of the concept of learner autonomy and perhaps its validity and applicability in different aspects of life has led educationalists to classify this concept according to different interests or uses.

Benson (1997) provides a model of three versions of learner autonomy which, he states, are parallel to approaches to knowledge and learning in humanities and social sciences (positivism, constructivism and critical theory). This model of learner autonomy comprises three versions: technical, psychological and political. The technical version implies learning a language in an informal way outside classrooms and without intervention from the teacher. Learners are urged to be responsible for their learning. The ideal of the technical version of learner autonomy is to prepare learners to deal with problems and issues responsibly when they arise. In the psychological version, autonomy is considered a capacity. Learners are allowed greater responsibility in learning. This version implies that autonomy is an internal transformation in the learner which may be supported by situational autonomy though it does not necessarily depend on it. The political version sees autonomy as control over the process and content of learning. The concern for learners in this version is the way structural conditions for controlling learning and the context in which they learn are achieved. Thus, interest here is in enabling learners to take control of their individual learning as well as the context of learning. However, more recently Benson (2011) criticised this model in that 'it often refers only to differences of emphasis within approaches that are typically oriented to learning

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management, cognitive processes and learning content at one and the same time' (p. 62). Also, Oxford (2003) criticised this model in that it is 'fragmentary' (p. 76) and privileges the political version of autonomy, which means that the concept of autonomy is still not fully emancipated from the political stigma and therefore may not be appropriately or completely qualified in education. Moreover, Benson's model lacks any consideration or account for the social aspect of learning. Therefore, Oxford (2003) added socio-cultural I and II perspectives, and a political-critical perspective. I present Oxford's (2003) four perspectives here in order to illustrate their importance for creating an appropriate atmosphere for learners and helping them develop their autonomy.

The technical perspective relates to the 'situational conditions' where autonomy may be developed, which are normally created by others rather than by the learners themselves, such as self-access centres, a classroom or home environment (Oxford, 2003, p. 81). Therefore, it is concerned with creating the appropriate environment or atmosphere in which learner autonomy may develop (Oxford, 2003). However, she (2003) argues that providing self-access centres or providing certain conditions alone are not sufficient for creating learners with agency. On this basis, the technical perspective referring to 'the act of learning a language outside the framework of an educational institution and without the intervention of a teacher' (Benson, 1997, p. 19), can be criticised.

According to Oxford (2003), this perspective looks at learning strategies as tools that the teacher passes to learners through learner training or strategy instruction. However, she (2003) adds that without teacher's knowledge of learners' current strategy use, their needs and their cultural beliefs, learner training or strategy instruction would be inert in helping learners adopt autonomous roles in their learning. Still, the technical perspective can be helpful in understanding the psychological and social factors in a certain situation and therefore help creating the appropriate environment and preparing learners psychologically for being autonomous learners.

The psychological perspective interests in the mental and emotional characteristics of learners both as individuals and as members of social or cultural groups. It refers

to autonomous learners as having agency, positive attitudes, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to situations when learners learn for enjoyment in the activity or for gaining competence whereas extrinsic motivation means learning is for the sake of rewards rather than for learning itself. Motivation is considerably dependent on the environment and context where learners learn and on the people involved. Oxford (2003) also sees learning strategies to be highly important in the psychological perspective of learner autonomy. She (2003) notes that learners' agency, motivation, confidence and performance can be enhanced by strategy instruction and learner training for strategy use. Nonetheless, Oxford (2003) points out that this perspective neglects the socio-cultural and mediated learning for learner autonomy and therefore she introduced the socio-cultural perspectives I and II.

The socio-cultural perspective; in this Oxford (2003) draws attention from the political version in Benson's model to the social and cultural elements of learner autonomy. Oxford bases this perspective on Vygotsky's (1978) work on mediation, which enables the learner to interact with the others around him/her, or 'move through the zone of proximal development' which refers to the learners' performance with and without help and assistance from the 'more capable others' around him/her (Oxford, 2003, p. 86). This perspective comprises socio-cultural I and socio-cultural II forms.

In the socio-cultural I perspective, the focus is on the individual learner learning within and with a group. Oxford (2003) points out that the learner is supported to develop self-regulation through providing help from the more capable other. As learners are provided with scaffolding, which refers to 'the complex set of interactions through which adults guide and promote children's thinking' (Edwards and Mercer, 1987, p. 151), they develop more and more self-regulation and move through the ZPD from proceeding with help from others to the stage of proceeding without outside help. Assistance is then gradually withdrawn. This perspective emphasises the importance of context because on the one hand learning takes place among individuals in a certain social and cultural setting, whilst on the other hand context offers opportunities of mediation for learners. It looks at the learner as an

individual within a group and learning taking place within a certain social and cultural setting.

Socio-cultural II perspective, like socio-cultural I, emphasises mediation. However, in the socio-cultural II view the emphasis is on 'the context of autonomy rather than the individual exercising it' (Oxford, 2003, p. 87). According to Oxford (2003), context includes the community within which learners learn, learners' relationships with others and the social and cultural environment. In this environment, new learners can develop their own learning strategies and become involved in mediation and interaction in the new context when older learners provide help for them to integrate. In this, scaffolding is an effective means that the more capable can employ to aid learners to adopt autonomous roles and work on their learning according to their preferred modes.

The political-critical perspective mainly criticises the overemphasis on student-centred learning, and the neglect of the non-individualistic, social environments that can accommodate autonomy. In this, Oxford (2003) states that 'contextual adversities such as ethnic oppression are not necessarily insuperable barriers to claiming personal power and mental autonomy' (p. 89), and Pennycook (1997) proposes that developing autonomy requires creating 'cultural alternatives' i.e., finding 'meanings in English that run against the class, gender, race and cultural assumptions linked to different contexts of language use' (p. 53). This perspective, therefore, demonstrates that learners have the power for authoring their worlds and how they should be contributors to this.

Smith (2003) argues for the appropriateness of learner autonomy in non-Western contexts through presenting two versions of pedagogy for developing learner autonomy: weak and strong versions. The weak version sees learners as lacking autonomy and therefore they should be helped or prepared to develop this capacity. However, this version denies the arguments that autonomy is innate and that different individuals can practise their autonomy in their own ways. Simply, it seems to encage autonomy in certain activities or procedures, and unless these are practised, autonomy is deemed to be absent. The strong version, on the other hand,

assumes that learners are autonomous in different manners and to different degrees. Therefore, this version escapes the criticism of the weak version.

However, it cannot be said that one model should be considered the only appropriate model to account for autonomy in different contexts. Rather, different models might be useful for interpreting certain forms of autonomy in different contexts depending on the socio-cultural environments of those contexts. This is because 'in real educational situations such perspectives are not black-and-white alternatives, but may combine (or conflict) in various ways' (Palfreyman, 2003, p. 4), and '[n]o single perspective should be considered antithetical to any other perspective' (Oxford, 2003, p. 90).

I now turn to justifying adopting Oxford's (2003) four-model perspective for interpreting the realisation of autonomy in the socio-cultural context of this study. With its emphasis on mediation and assistance provided to learners, Oxford's (2003) framework provides opportunities for autonomy to be realised in different modes and degrees. One of the most important privileges of this framework is that it does not confine the concept of autonomy to individualised work. It rather allows autonomy to take different forms, the most important of which that proved to be evident in the context of this study is collaboration and group work. Therefore, this framework was chosen mainly because of its diversity in accounting for different interpretations of autonomy and distancing the concept from individualism. That is, it offers opportunities for autonomy to be viewed from the perspectives of mediation and collaboration. Autonomy here is not understood as a concept that is appropriate or accommodated only in individualist societies or inappropriate in non-individualist ones but one that is valid in collectivist societies where group work and collaboration are highly valued. The teacher is seen as an important party in teaching and learning, as a facilitator and contributor to knowledge, rather than learners being referred to as individuals working individually or independently from the teacher. This way, the concept of autonomy becomes open to different interpretations and to diverse realisations which allows it to be appropriate to the requirements of different contexts and the needs of different learners.

Through presenting these versions, I tried to show the multi-forms of autonomy and how it can come in degrees and can have different interpretations (e.g. Sinclair, 2008), according to the requirements of different contexts and learners.

2.2.7 Conclusion

The rationale behind autonomy and the seeds for its emergence seem to be shared among different cultures and contexts. This can be because learning normally has the goal of creating individuals who can themselves contribute to creating their societies as well as the goal of preparing learners to extend beyond school boundaries. In this section, I have presented an account of autonomy; its definitions, emergence, versions and argued that it can be manifested in ways appropriate to different cultural contexts despite the fact that it is sometimes considered inappropriate in some cultural contexts (This argument is presented in more detail in sections 2.4.3 and 2.4.4). In the next section, I review the concept of culture and how it impinges on learning, and on autonomy.

2.3 Culture

2.3.1 Introduction

This section of the literature review is intended to focus on the concept of culture, what it refers to and the concepts relevant and connected to it, as well as how learning is looked at within cultures. It also seeks to map out the relationship between culture and autonomy, and discuss how autonomy might be manifested in different cultures.

Palfreyman (2003) notes the importance of culture in language learning and education because learning and education take place within a culture, as well as because culture and language are inseparable, and as Brown (2007) notes: culture is:

> highly important in the learning of a second language. A language
> is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language; the two

are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two
without losing the significance of either language or culture (p.189).

Because this thesis aims to find out the perceptions towards and observe the realisation of learner autonomy in the learning and teaching practices within a particular culture, an understanding of the concept of culture becomes necessary. Aoki and Smith (1999) assert that 'when the validity of learner autonomy in a particular cultural context is questioned, we should suggest that definitions of both ''culture'' and ''autonomy'' need to be carefully considered' (p. 19). Thus this section reviews different interpretations of culture, and also scrutinises different sub-versions of culture.

2.3.2 Definitions of culture

Hofstede cites one definition of culture as follows:

> Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values (Kluckhohn,1951,p. 86, n. 5). (Hofstede, 2001, p. 9).

The 'patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting' reflect or constitute the personalities of the people who follow these ways. The medium with which people communicate is language. Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkove (2010) assert that the 'words of which a language consists are symbols' which are 'the vehicles of culture transfer' (p. 389); and Brown (2007) notes that the 'acquisition of a second language...is also the acquisition of a second culture' (pp. 189-190). Culture is typically considered to be a social activity which creates individuals, and in which the individual absorbs values, habits, traditions, ways of life, etc. and reflects these artefacts in socialising with other members of a culture (Holliday, 1994). The interest of this study is how members of one culture behave in the process of learning a

language within their culture, and what sort of autonomy the members of this culture practise.

2.3.2.1 Four dimensions of cultural differences

Hofstede (1986) presents a 'four-dimensional model of cultural differences' (p. 306). He labels these four dimensions as: individualism vs. collectivism, small/large power distance, strong/weak uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity vs. femininity. These factors are said to be responsible for downfalls in classroom (Hofstede, 1986), and can have both negative and positive influences on the development of learner autonomy (Palfreyman, 2003). Therefore, they are considered in relation to their influence on education.

2.3.2.1.1 Collectivism vs. Individualism

Collectivism denotes societies where individuals are concerned about the welfare of the group rather than individual interests (Hofstede et al,. 2010). As opposed to collectivism, individualism refers to societies where the interests of the individual are prioritised to the interest of the group (Hofstede et al., 2010). Hofstede (1986) presents differences in the relationship between teachers and students, and students and other students in relation to individualism/ collectivism. Listed below are examples of these differences:

> **Collectivist societies**
>
> . traditions are so important in society;
>
> . learning is almost exclusive to the young;
>
> . teachers teach students how to do;
>
> . students in the classroom speak only when the teacher allows them;
>
> . students speak in peers or in small groups only;
>
> . keeping face is highly important for both teachers and students;

. knowledge is sought for the sake of gaining high social status;

. graduation and certificates are more important than knowledge.

Individualist societies

. society emphasises whatever is new;

. learning is not constrained by age, it is not for the young only;

. students are taught how to learn;

. students volunteer to speak in class in response to teachers' questions;

. students speak in large groups;

. keeping face is not appreciated very much;

. education is a means for acquiring knowledge and for financial concerns;

. gaining knowledge is prioritised over gaining certificates.

It should be noted here that Arab countries are classified as collectivist countries (Hofstede, 2001). Palfreyman (2003) asserts that individualism establishes loose relations between members and emphasises the independence of individuals and thus is more suitable for autonomy. As opposed to this, collectivism which establishes strong relations between its members is considered, for him, an obstacle to autonomy. However, Aoki and Smith (1999) question the arguments that collectivist cultures do not suit autonomy and note that 'group-orientedness can be seen as a basis for autonomy, no less than individualism might be' (p. 22). Therefore, collectivism can be appropriate to implementing group-based forms of autonomy because it is characterised by interdependence amongst its members. This debate about social autonomy is well-established in the literature (e.g. Little, 1996) and is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

2.3.2.1.2 Power distance (high/ low)

The power distance can be employed to describe the power relations between two sides such as boss and subordinate, teacher and student, etc. (Hofstede, 2001, p. 83).

By employing this criterion to education, Hofstede (2001) claims that in many high power distance societies the teacher-student relationship in the classroom matches that of the parent-child and that teaching is teacher centred and is mostly imprinted by rote learning. As opposed to high power distance societies, Hofstede (2001) presents teachers and students in low power distance societies as equal and teaching is student centred, students initiate talks, intervene and contradicting the teacher is accepted. In a study of Chinese students, Ho and Crookall (1995) claim that teacher's authority in high power distance societies erects a wall in the face of implementing autonomy. However, several educationalists argue for the appropriateness of autonomy in different cultures, suggesting that cultural differences are not a barrier to autonomy (e.g. Oxford, 2003; Littlewood, 2001, 1999; Esch, 1996; Little, 1996).

2.3.2.1.3 Uncertainty avoidance: (strong/weak)

Uncertainty avoidance is the degree to which people in a certain culture manifest tolerance towards 'unstructured, unclear, or unpredictable situations' (Hofstede, 1986, p. 308). In high or strong uncertainty avoidance cultures, students and teachers tend to have defined learning goals and organised learning situations. Teachers are considered authoritative and know everything that students will not show any disagreement. Students often ascribe their success to other people (such as the teacher) other than themselves. Hofstede (2001) notes that in cultures with strong uncertainty avoidance 'parents are supposed to watch over their children's proper motivation and behavior at school- for example, by signing children's homework assignments and/or performance records .… Parents are laypersons and teachers are experts who know' (p. 163).

Opposed to strong uncertainty avoidance cultures, low or weak uncertainty avoidance cultures seem more lenient and negotiable. For example, strong structure in school is desirable neither by students nor teachers. Students prefer freedom in learning and working without clear objectives or strict timetables; the teacher is not expected to

know everything and might be contradicted; students see themselves as sources for their achievements. In such cultures, parents may interfere in school affairs. Also, knowledge is not contingent on teachers: students are usually encouraged to seek knowledge and learn by themselves.

2.3.2.1.4 Masculinity/ Femininity

This differentiation accounts for the role that men and women play in a society. In feminine cultures, weaker students may be publicly praised only for the sake of encouragement. However, praise in masculine cultures for both students and teachers is common, such as granting awards which is not found in feminine cultures. In relation to autonomy, Aoki and Hamakawa (2003) assert that emphasising feminism in teacher education is a boost for learner autonomy.

In spite of the wide range of Hofstede's study, it has been criticised for oversimplification of the richness and variety of cultures, tending to otherise and exoticise cultures creating binaries such as 'either' and 'or', and 'us' and 'them', as well as leading to stereotyping cultures as monolithic and static (Holliday, 2007). Moreover, Holliday (2007) notes that using these terms and contrasting societies as quite distinct is considered as a tool that will not help to understand other cultures but to otherise them.

2.3.3 National culture

National culture is used here to refer to the form of culture that is prevalent in a society and which makes it distinctive from other societies. Palfreyman (2003) refers to an interpretation of culture as ethnic or national culture, and suggests that it is in this sense that culture is usually interpreted in relation to autonomy; where national cultures such as Chinese and Arab cultures are sometimes seen as an obstacle for autonomy. Thus, Palfreyman (2003) queries whether autonomy is ethnocentric, i.e. whether it is exclusive to Western cultures where it is believed to have initiated (c.f. Aoki and Smith, 1999).

The national culture that is prevalent in Libya is rooted in Islamic traditions. The traditional teaching methods employed might have strong influence on the educational system and the relationship between students and teachers as they are rooted in the social culture of the Libyans. For example, Flowerdew and Miller (1995) on the notion of culture in second language (L2) lectures, suggest that 'Arab students… tend to treat grades as negotiable and…sometimes expect the teacher to ''help'' them by raising the grade awarded. This attitude can be related to teaching in the Kuran' (p. 357). However, counter to this stereotype, Islamic teaching asserts and emphasises personal opinion, critical thinking, criticism, investigation and negotiation of matters. Hofstede (2001) points out that 'Islam is … egalitarian. In Islam, all believers are equal before God — although they may be very unequal in society' (p. 114). This invalidates the stereotypes that learners, indeed people in general, from such backgrounds are deprived of or incapable of thinking critically, negotiating, criticising, etc. which in turn invalidates the claims that autonomy is inappropriate in non-Western cultures.

Culture in its national sense is however usually tackled as a monolithic entity, thus it contributes more to exoticising others rather than to understanding or approaching those others (Holliday, 2003; Kubota, 1999), as well as leading to 'learners from different national backgrounds ... [being] represented evaluatively (and often simplistically) in literature about education, usually according approval to supposedly 'Western' values' (Palfreyman, 2001, p. 55). As autonomy being concerned, this resulted in 'the concept of autonomy ... [to be sometimes seen] laden with cultural values, particularly those of the West' (Jones, 1995, p. 228), which applies to 'many countries between Morocco and Japan' (Jones, 1995, p. 229). The result of this is the confinement of the concept of autonomy to Western cultures; therefore, Holliday (2003) stresses that it should be freed from such cultural attachments which limit its popularity.

For these reasons, and because culture is not only national and monolithic (Palfreyman, 2003), Holliday (1994) points to a problem in the study of culture in its large sense:

One of the problems is that the most common use of the word — as national culture — is very broad and conjures up vague notions about nations, races and sometimes whole continents, which are too generalised to be useful, and which often become mixed up with stereotypes and prejudices (p. 21).

Therefore, Holliday (1999) offers mitigation to this criticism through the small/large paradigm as an alternative to the standardised concept of culture.

2.3.4 Small/ Large culture

Palfreyman (2003) notes that: 'One issue in the study of culture is the *size*, or *range* of the culture to be examined' (original emphasis, p. 6). Hence, Holliday's (1999) presentation of small/large culture can be one way of removing potential charges against the traditionally used large culture and of allowing for more accurate and honest understanding of individuals, e.g. teachers' and students' practices, roles, relationships, etc. within a certain context.

Large culture, as Holliday (1999, p. 237) proposes, refers to 'ethnic', 'national' or 'international' culture and is characterised by its vulnerability to reducing and otherising foreign students and teachers. It is essentialist and culturist in that it is related to a nation or ethnic group, contains other subcultures and is prescriptive in orientation. Small culture, on the other hand, refers to 'any cohesive social grouping or activities' (Holliday, 1999, p. 237). It is non-essentialist and non-culturist, i.e. not connected to a certain nation or ethnic group, not dependent or supplementary to large culture, and is used as a heuristic tool to interpret the behaviour of a specific group. Consequently, the small culture precludes ethnicity and otherisation from occurring in culture (Holliday, 1999), hence it can provide a basis for culture-free learning practice.

The motive behind this distinction, according to Holliday (1999) is two-fold. Firstly is the dominance of 'large culture' over inter-cultural discourses in applied linguistics. Secondly, 'the two notions of 'culture' already seem to exist in both academic and popular usage but are often not recognized as distinct' (Holliday, 1999,

p. 238). That the two notions are used interchangeably and are unrecognised leads to misconceptualising both of them, especially the small one as it is more vulnerable to and targeted by *foreign academic culture* invasion through forcing alien practices on it.

Small cultures are not necessarily small in size, and do not necessarily fall within the domain of large cultures. They 'can thus run between as well as within related large cultures' (Holliday, 1999, p. 239). Small cultures are concerned with the activities running among members of a group rather than with the characteristics of the group. Being different from a large culture, a small culture is qualified to be 'a heuristic means in the process of interpreting group behaviour' (Holliday, 1999, p. 240).

Holliday (1999) says that small cultures 'are not anomalous, are not subservient to large cultures' (p. 240). Therefore, a small culture can be independent and its members can create amongst them an atmosphere of effective learning. The merit of Holliday's paradigm is that ethnic or national cultures do not or cannot obstruct the mélange of small cultures from crossing borders as they are independent of large cultures, and can 'extend beyond the boundaries of the national culture' (Holliday, 1994, p. 29).

Holliday (1999) and Palfreyman (2003) point out that small as well as large cultures can influence autonomy. Similarly, Holliday (1994) argues that education is often influenced by the socio-cultural factors of the society. Therefore, Tudor (1996) notes the small culture of the classroom is a pedagogical entity but is still a part of and is influenced by the larger culture and therefore should be approached with reference to that context in which it is embedded. In this, I advocate approaching small cultures as probably an appropriate way of investigating the form and validity of autonomy in the large culture. This is both because of Tudor's (1996) claim just mentioned as well as because small cultures are probably flexible enough to serve its members' needs, requirements and tendencies, e.g. learners and teachers in a school.

2.3.5 Academic culture

This part presents the views about learning and the current conceptualisations within the broader national culture. It seeks to look at how people value learning and gaining knowledge in educational institutions.

Palfreyman (2003, p. 2) refers to one use of culture placing the learner as a member of a 'sociocultural' context and emphasising the importance of socio-cultural context and the engagement and participation in the context. Flowerdew and Miller (1995) take academic culture as:

> those features of the lecture situation which require an understanding of the particular academic values, roles, assumptions, attitudes, patterns of behavior, and so on. Academic culture may be identified at various levels: at the level of a group of countries (e.g. Western countries); at the level of an individual country; at the level of a group of institutions within a given country; or at the level of the individual institution within a given country (p. 362).

Palfreyman (2003) argues that national culture has often been seen as a hindrance to the promotion of autonomy as viewed by teachers. Other educationalists such as Holliday (1994) and Pennycook (1997) view the efforts for promoting and exporting specific manifestations of learner autonomy to non-Western cultures as a new form of imperialism and argue for finding culturally appropriate alternative manifestations. Dhaif (1985) raises the important point that culture and learning can influence each other in that the national culture is reflected in the academic culture and is laden with traditions and tenets from national culture, thus potentially influencing the learners' strategies and attitudes to learning. To the extent that the relationship between a father and a son is marked with a degree of formality, respect and reverence in the Libyan national culture, this type of relationship is carried over to the classroom between teachers and students. This can give autonomy a particular, appropriate realisation, but this does not necessarily constitute a particular constraint on it.

2.3.6 Classroom and school cultures

In language learning, culture is usually portrayed as a national culture (Palfreyman 2003; Holliday 2003, 1999, 1994), not differentiating large and small cultures. Holliday (1994) refers to this as too broad a use of the concept which therefore entails prejudice and stereotypes. Therefore, he (1994) refers to one type of culture which is temporary, with short history and traditions. The classroom culture is classified as one of these in that it exists only when students are in classes (Holliday, 1994). Tudor (1996, pp.141-142) defines classroom culture as:

> the complex of attitudes and expectations which shape learners' sociocultural personality in the classroom, and thereby their interaction with their language study. The concept certainly incorporates aspects of learners' national or regional cultures, but it is also influenced by the social, economic and ideological climate which prevails in their home culture at any point in time and by the peer group or sub-culture to which the learners belong.

This type of culture is transmitted to new members because it is necessary for its members to learn it in order to integrate into the group (Holliday, 1994). However, Holliday (1994) notes that this culture and its underlying relationship between the teacher and students seem to have been initiated outside the classroom. Because this overlap between this culture and the larger cultural influence on it, the link between the two can make the small culture a representative of the large culture and hence can validate the investigation of a small culture for the sake of understanding a large one. However, Palfreyman (2003) argues that although small cultures relate to and may be influenced by big ones, they 'are not... an extension of them; and they have their own implications for autonomy' (p. 12).

Another small culture that intersects with the large culture and subsumes the small culture of the classroom is the school culture which is:

> the complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the

very core of the organization. The culture is the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act (Barth, 2001, p. 8).

The school culture, argues Barth (2001), influences life and learning in the school more strongly than the ministry of education, the superintendent, the school staff, or even the head of the school. This gives this type of culture a peculiarity that allows an amount of difference from the out-of-school culture, and perhaps allows the implementation of a change to new policies or methodologies.

2.3.7 Conclusion

In this section, I presented a view of the concept of culture: its definition, dimensions, divisions, as well as its relation to the academic realm in which it is sometimes seen as intrusion erecting a wall in front of publicising autonomy as a universal concept. Presenting these divisions helps understand the different aspects of the concept of culture in order to see how it might or might not cause rejection to autonomy in some contexts. In this, the national sense of culture is sometimes seen as discouraging to autonomy in that it does not allow for diversity within a culture, e.g. it does not recognise culture in its small and large senses. However, national cultures such as non-Western ones have normally been stereotyped as inappropriate to autonomy. That is, national cultures are sometimes being stereotyped as inappropriate to autonomy. Therefore, this survey of culture and its divisions attempted to provide a background on how cultures are considered in the academic realm and in relation to autonomy, which is detailed more in the next section. It also presented an argument on how cultures vary in size and range (Palfreyman, 2003), and therefore, they should not be judged holistically in claims about their appropriateness to autonomy.

Having looked at autonomy and culture and their definitions and divisions, in the following section, I present the intersection of autonomy and culture, the relationship between autonomy and culture, and how autonomy is seen in relation to its appropriateness in different cultures in the literature as well as issues that have been raised in the course of investigating the validity of different cultures for autonomy. I

then argue how autonomy can be accommodated in different cultures and discuss the social aspects in defining autonomy.

2.4 Autonomy and culture

2.4.1 Introduction

The previous sections included a consideration of the concept of autonomy and the concept of culture. In this section, I look at the relationship between them and how culture is considered in the literature about autonomy. I also look at the issue of individualisation in the field of autonomy and try to defend the appropriateness of autonomy through arguments in the literature supporting the validity of autonomy in different cultures. Then I conclude the section with an argument for a definition to learner autonomy that allows its validity to different contexts and does not relate to certain contexts but is freed from background attachments. I note here that, although I am to defend the validity of autonomy in different contexts and its appropriateness for different cultures, I intend to provide the two visions, the one that defends the validity of autonomy as well the view that claims the inappropriateness of autonomy in certain cultural contexts. This is to acknowledge why autonomy is sometimes considered inappropriate in some cultures, but then to provide the counter-argument.

Palfreyman (2003) notes that studies of culture in linguistics and education are marked by a focus on issues of power, access and ideology where autonomy, culture and learning are shaped by the interests of people—learners and teachers, etc., and the power relations between them in the society and the classroom. Palfreyman (2003) presents four types of culture that may affect autonomy. These are educational and academic cultures, professional cultures of language teaching, organisational cultures, and social class- or gender-associated cultures. These four types vary in size though all may be classified as small in that they are being positioned within larger cultures. The present study is primarily concerned with educational and academic culture as it explores the issues of teaching and learning and the tendencies of learners and teachers in this type of culture.

In the argument about cultural appropriateness of autonomy, Aoki and Smith (1999) present three misconceptions about culture as it relates to language learning. The first is that a culture is considered equal to a nation. They argue that the large culture is invalid when investigating classrooms and therefore when there are doubts about cultural appropriateness, nation and culture should not be treated as equals. Secondly, culture is sometimes seen as static and unchanging. Because settings and contexts change, which they state is inevitable, what has failed to work in the past may work in the present or future (and equally what has worked in the past may not work in the future). They also argue that imposing a certain culture on some people can prevent them from being active agents in the formation of culture. Therefore, if language teachers are to help learners become active agents in their worlds, they should not restrict their creativity and potential by imposing certain cultural stereotypes on them. The third misconception is that the influence of one culture on another is necessarily unfavourable and undesirable. Cultures certainly overlap and meet and when they do the influence of one on the other is inevitable. However, influence becomes unfavourable when a cultural group imposes values on another group. In the classroom, when teachers and students meet they may influence each other and form their own '''negotiated culture''', i.e. a culture that is valid for evaluating 'appropriacy or inappropriacy, with evaluation taking full account of the views of the participants in question' (Aoki and Smith, 1999, p. 21). Therefore, I believe that this 'negotiated culture' is the one that should be targeted when proclaiming the validity or invalidity of a certain culture to autonomy.

In the study of autonomy in certain cultural settings, Palfreyman (2003) criticises that 'authors often use their position *between* cultures to interpret how autonomy fits into cultural settings where they are both insiders and outsiders' (p. 16, original emphasis). By adopting this attitude, he argues that such authors place themselves in a position of comparing one culture with another. This leads to judging the validity/ invalidity of autonomy in certain contexts on the grounds of its appropriateness or inappropriateness in another context. Therefore, judging the appropriateness of autonomy to certain students or cultures should be through understanding learners and their cultures rather than judging them according to pre-defined assumptions. In this sense, Pennycook (1997) concludes that: 'To encourage 'learner autonomy'

universally, without first becoming acutely aware of the social, cultural and political context in which one is working, may lead at best to inappropriate pedagogies and at worst to cultural impositions' (p. 44). Therefore, in an attempt to free the concept from such accusations, Pennycook (1997) states that autonomy may exist in contexts other than Western ones but the realisation of autonomy may differ considerably from one educational context to another. He urges students to find cultural alternatives to Western constructions of autonomy in order to accommodate an appropriate version that does not bear in it some alien culture.

In approaching cultural contexts; therefore, researchers or educators should develop what Holliday (1996) terms 'social imagination' and be 'critical and aware of the social influences and implications' towards the contexts and have 'the ability to locate ... [themselves] and ... [their] actions critically within a wider community or world scenario' (p. 235), which induces no partiality or bias or a sense of comparing a context of study against another context or any touchstone criteria. Therefore, as Holliday (2007a) argues, rather than taking things for granted, in this study I attempted to see 'the familiar as strange' (p. 68).

Before I move to exhibit the validity of autonomy in different cultural contexts, I would like to present how autonomy is misrepresented through falsely being cohered with the notion of individualisation (See also 2.2.2; 2.2.3; 2.2.6).

2.4.2 Autonomy and individualisation

Individualisation is one of the main issues that entered the debate of inappropriateness of autonomy and has been behind claims of its invalidity to some cultures. This issue and its effect in the argument about universality of autonomy are discussed in detail in this part.

In its germination in the field of language education, the concept of autonomy has been strongly linked to individualisation and learners learning individually (Murray, 2014; Benson, 2011, 2007, 1996), resulting in what Oxford (2008) proposes as '[o]ne of the most significant theoretical clashes of recent years in the L2 [second language] field...between proponents of (Western-style individual) learner

autonomy and advocates of social autonomy' (pp. 48-49). Hence, this association of autonomy in its outset with individualisation has been one important reason for the assumption that autonomy requires learners to work individually.

Assumptions of cultural inappropriateness of autonomy are presented in literature through attributing the roots of autonomy to Western cultures and confining its validity to individualistic cultures and claiming its inappropriateness to collectivist cultures. In drawing a distinction between different cultures and assuming the validity of autonomy in certain cultures—namely non-Western cultures, Kubota (1999) argues that Western cultures tend to favour individualism, critical and analytical thinking and self-expression whereas learners in collectivist cultures are imprinted with memorisation, indirection, and absence of critical thinking. Atkinson (1997) stresses this even more when he notes that critical thinking is a mark of, and presupposes, individualism, and Sonaiya (2002) argues that autonomous methods are rooted in individualist cultural traditions. However, Benson (2006) invalidates Sonaiya's claims of autonomy inappropriateness to non-Western cultures in that they were 'mainly directed at individualized, technology-based approaches to language instruction' (p. 25). Moreover, Benson criticises the connection between individualism and autonomy on the basis that, 'the implications of a more critical version of autonomy are social' (1996, p. 33). In critiquing individualised work, Tudor (1996) notes that individualised work in learning and teaching which was teacher- and material-centred has been unsatisfactory. This, he notes, justifies the disinterest in individualisation since the late 1970s. Moreover, being marked with critical and analytical thinking does not make individualism exclusively appropriate to autonomy. Autonomy may also be accommodated in collectivist cultures as different forms and degrees of autonomy make it flexible to the requirements and modes of different contexts and learners. Oxford (2008) responds to the assertions that autonomy is only suitable in individualist cultures by calling for the adoption of social autonomy for an understanding of autonomy in non-Western contexts. Also, she tries to distance the concept of autonomy from being exclusive to individualist cultures and defends its validity for different contexts through arguing that it is more valid to refer to certain versions of autonomy being inappropriate in non-individualist cultures than to refer to these cultures as infertile ground for autonomy.

Nonetheless, although it is still sometimes seen as a capacity or set of capacities associated with individual work, autonomy has started to be viewed as a social construct over the past three decades (Murray, 2014). Indeed, steps have been taken and tendencies evident toward recognising and accepting autonomy as a universal concept that is not exclusive to Western cultures. Since 1997, Benson and Voller have proposed that 'the close link that was observed between individualization and autonomy is beginning to be broken' (p. 12), and Aoki and Smith (1999) state that the shift to accepting social views and group orientedness as supportive for learner autonomy is becoming popular and is as important as individualism in the argument about autonomy. Hence they provide a starting point for welcoming and justifying the growing interest in the tendency towards the social versions of autonomy. This tendency to accepting and valuing the social aspects in learning is important for autonomy to escape the accusations of exclusiveness to only individualistic cultures.

In the next part, I review how literature shows that autonomy can be valid in different cultures through presenting different arguments as well as findings of studies.

2.4.3 Validity of autonomy

The validity of autonomy in some contexts has been questioned and investigated, especially in regard to cultural appropriateness which Benson (2011, p. 70) calls an 'Achilles' heel'. However, since cultural practices differ from one society to another, such modes of teaching and learning can take different forms in different contexts or among different individuals, sometimes conditioned by cultural practices.

In the argument for appropriateness and universality of autonomy in different cultures, Little (1996) argues that autonomy can overcome whatever differences exist between cultures because autonomy in first language acquisition is essentially 'a biological imperative' and 'involuntary' (p. 208). This means that since autonomy is innate in all humans, it could be seen as a right for all learners; different cultures value it differently and people practise it in different ways. Littlewood (1996) argues that the goal of education is to create in individuals the capacity to think and learn independently (p. 434); therefore, Benson (2011) looks at the appropriateness of

autonomy from the perspective that autonomy is a goal and therefore it is common to different cultures:

> To the extent that education contributes to the development of culture, the promotion of autonomy can be seen as a culturally legitimate goal in the sense that autonomous learners are likely to be the most able to contribute to cultural development and transformation (p. 71).

The debate about the cultural appropriateness of autonomy has revolved around three views. The first is that autonomy is not appropriate in non-Western contexts. The literature on autonomy is laden with references ascribing the emergence of autonomy to Western cultures and philosophies as well as imprinting autonomy with Western cultural artefacts. Western cultures are generally individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 1983), thus exporting autonomy to non-Western cultures which are normally non-individualistic means autonomy is perceived as a Western construct imposed on those cultures (Sonaiya, 2002; Pennycook, 1997; Jones, 1995; Holliday, 1994). This apparently comes at the neglect of the assertions that different cultures value autonomy differently and that autonomy can be realised differently from one culture to another as well as from one learner to another (e.g. Benson, 2011).

The second is that autonomy with different realisations is valid in different contexts. In this view, Little (1996) points out that the realisation of autonomy is manifested differently by different individuals in different contexts as it is 'universal' and 'capable of almost infinite variation, depending on the particular cultural circumstances in which it is developed' (Little, 1996, p. 208). Similarly, Pennycook (1997) states that autonomy may exist in other contexts than Western ones but the realisation of autonomy may differ considerably from one educational context to another, and commenting on Hofstede's (1983) model of cultural differences, he attributes the claims of the inappropriateness of autonomy in some contexts to 'the ways in which autonomy is theorised and practised [which] may be very much based on an ethnocentric western view of education' (p. 44). Similarly, Chan, (2000); Littlewood (1999); and Pierson (1996) adopt this view. On this basis, authors such as

Oxford (2003), Esch (1996), and Little (1996) argue that cultural differences do not impede autonomy.

Thirdly, others still assert that culture can assist in cultivating autonomous learning and that autonomy can be accommodated congruently with different cultures (e.g. Pierson, 1996; Ho and Crookall, 1995). Ho and Crookall (1995) argue that although some aspects of the Chinese culture impede autonomy, other aspects support the development of autonomy.

In defence of the appropriateness of autonomy in different cultural contexts, Holliday (2003) suggests three approaches to autonomy where he maps the perspectives that are mostly prevalent in the literature about autonomy, and aims to find a frame for it to be applicable in different cultural contexts. Approach A is the native-speakerist approach which refers to how 'we', referring to native speakers of English, perceive 'them', i.e. non-native speakers; this is 'deeply culturist in its vision of 'our' superior 'native-speaker' culture' (Holliday, 2003, p. 115). In this approach learners are considered autonomous when they behave in the same way as native speakers do and embrace their culture. Holliday notes that although native-speakerism is learner-centred, it still involves imposing on the learner the learning activities that 'the *teacher* constructs' (2003, p.115. original emphasis); and is oriented towards validating autonomy in certain cultures and therefore is an invalid approach for accounting for autonomy.

Approach B, the cultural relativist approach is distinguished from approach A in that it acknowledges the political aspect of autonomy. In this approach, no two cultures are considered to be alike and therefore, again, 'they' from non-Western cultures are not expected to or cannot embrace the autonomy that 'we' native speakers enjoy. This approach thus recommends developing a methodology that matches 'them', which certainly differs from the methodology 'we' employ. Holliday (2003) argues that denying others the right to be autonomous springs from the image that 'we' have of them rather than knowledge of what they really are. He provides evidence through reporting a study by Jones (1995) in Cambodia that 'we' could be falsely holding that image of 'them'.

Approach C is the social autonomy approach which Holliday (2003) believes distances from culturism and escapes it through presuming that all people can be autonomous in their own ways. This can be reached through searching 'for the worlds which the students bring with them' rather than constraining them to 'TESOL professionalism which is influenced by native-speakerism' (Holliday, 2003, p. 118), because all cultures, rather than only Western or any other cultures, can allow autonomy. The main point that approach C addresses is that 'autonomy is a universal until there is evidence otherwise', and that the norm should be that when autonomy is not perceived, it is because we cannot see it, rather than because those people are not autonomous. This way social autonomy escapes culturism and treats people as equals (Holliday, 2003, p. 118).

However, among these three approaches, approach C seems the most lenient to accepting differences in cultures and therefore to recognising the versatility in which autonomy can appear in different cultures. That is, approach C seems to offer spaces to the different forms that autonomy can take and therefore sustain its appropriateness in different cultures. Literature shows examples where autonomy is realised according to the needs of learners and accommodated in tenets of different cultures accordingly. To demonstrate this, I present some studies that have tackled the issue of socio-cultural elements of some contexts and their relation to autonomy.

The following examples of studies illustrate how learners' culture must be respected and also show how certain manifestations of autonomy are appropriate in different contexts. Brown (2007) reports a study by Carter (2001) showing that in spite of the tendency of learners in Trinidad and Tobago to rely on teachers and teacher dominance, autonomy can be fostered in an appropriate form in that context. There is also evidence that autonomy can be fostered through group work. Hozayen (2011) carried out a study on Egyptian learners of English to see the influence of their previous language experience, which she describes as examination-oriented and teacher-centred, on the role of the teacher, their roles as learners and their opinions towards language learning. Through this she attempted to find out their readiness for autonomy. She concluded that more than two thirds of the students showed

confidence, ability and willingness, and demonstrated that they were autonomous to some extent. However, she noted that students were

> still torn by their inherited and culturally bound beliefs that the teacher should be at the centre of their learning and that the teacher is capable enough to plan their learning goals and road map the miraculous pathways that would lead them to their successful learning (Hozayen, 2011, p. 122).

The study also showed that most students preferred being with peers and showed comfort in working and interacting with others, and probably felt secure in the presence of teachers. In another context, Turkey, Dişlen (2011) carried out a study on students of a preparatory programme learning English at a Turkish university. His study showed that although students valued the teacher's help and guidance, they demonstrated readiness for autonomy, awareness that they should be responsible for their learning, ability to persist with learning without the teacher, as well as expressing an inclination toward group work. Littlewood (2001) carried out a wide ranging study on students from a number of countries— eight in Asia and three in Europe. The results support Holliday's adoption of a social autonomy approach. He concluded that:

- 'Most students in all countries question the traditional authority structure of the classroom';
- 'Most students in all countries would like to see themselves as active participants in the classroom learning process';
- 'Most students in all countries have a positive attitude towards co-operating in groups in order to achieve common goals';
- 'In every country, there is considerable variation between the responses of individual students';
- 'The differences in the means of 'whole countries' and 'whole cultures' are considerably less than the range of variation between individuals within each country or culture' (pp. 21-22).

In another study, supporting further the assertion that autonomy can be realised in different forms in different cultures and that learners can perform autonomously in different ways, Littlewood (1999) shows that East Asian students carry different attitudes towards certain aspects of autonomy from Western students, and that literature suggests that such learners have different choices and opportunities when learning. He further asserts that 'at the individual level, there are no intrinsic differences that make students in one group either less, or more, capable of developing whatever forms of autonomy are seen as appropriate to language learning' (p. 88).

Other studies have mostly focused on Asia such as China (Gieve and Clark, 2005; Gan, Humphreys and Hamp-Lyonz, 2004) and Hong Kong (Chan, Spratt and Humphreys, 2002). In other contexts, especially in Arab countries, studies exploring the relation of autonomy to the socio-cultural context are rare. Examples are Palfreyman's (2001) study in the Turkish context where he found that learner autonomy within the Turkish context refers to a form of interaction and that it takes a non-individualist form. He also pointed out that autonomy was socially constructed and grounded in the socio-cultural context of his study (p. 242). Sonaiya (2002) touched on the issue in sub-Saharan Africa and claimed that autonomy is rooted in individualist cultures and therefore is inappropriate in other cultures. Othman (2009) investigated the Syrian context who stressed the importance of investigating different contexts to find out their appropriateness to autonomy rather than judging them beforehand. In Oman, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) carried out a study on English language teachers in a university language centre and concluded that the majority of university EFL teachers see autonomy to have a positive influence on language learning and believed in the importance of autonomy to involve 'learners in having the freedom and/or ability to make choices and decisions' (p. 286). The current study targets the Libyan context, in North Africa. There has only been one study in Libya that investigated the practice of and attitudes to autonomy. That study was carried out by Eidweni (2012) on secondary school level students. Her study investigated the ways that autonomy might be enhanced, the role of teachers in this, and the attitudes of teachers and students towards autonomous learning. Her study showed that participants exhibited eagerness and enthusiasm towards autonomous learning. She

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concluded that there was a considerable practice of autonomy and positive attitude towards accepting it by participants but its implementation was limited by several constraints such as the necessity to cover all the prescribed material by teachers, the examination system and the centralisation of the education system. Therefore, she recommended decentralising the education system, allowing opportunities to teachers to decide materials and methods that match their students' requirements, renewing the examination system, renewing the traditional evaluation system for teachers, and providing schools with technology teaching aids. It is hoped that this present study provides a theoretical and practical contribution to the literature on learner autonomy. The findings of such studies support the opponents of the dichotomy of collectivism and individualism in language learning and teaching as the results show that it is individual differences between individual learners, rather than cultural differences that affect learning and teaching.

In addition to such studies, Benson (2011), Kumaravadivelu (2003), Ryan and Deci (2000), and Sinclair (2000) point out that different cultures differ in their valuing of and desire for autonomy. However, autonomy is more a need than a want for humans (Ryan and Deci, 2000), therefore the existence of autonomy in different cultures is a matter of degree (Sinclair, 2000; Dearden, 1972), and type, i.e. the different forms autonomy can take (Jiménez Raya et al., 2008; Little, 1990), rather than total presence or absence. In other words, 'autonomy manifests itself in different ways and to differing degrees' (Cotterall, 1995, p. 195).

Consequently and in line with this, and as a precondition for the wider spread of autonomy, Schmenk (2005) states that autonomy should be divorced from cultural, social and political stigma in order to be promoted universally and urges the need for the realisation of forms of autonomy that match the needs of particular personal, institutional and cultural contexts, i.e. autonomy which 'encompasses a critical awareness of one's own possibilities and limitations within particular contexts' (p. 115). She argues that 'glocalising' autonomy, i.e. reconciling autonomy with particular cultural and social contexts is more feasible than imposing or exporting autonomy to other contexts. Similarly, Kumaravadivelu (2001) argues for the 'advancement of a context-sensitive language education based on a true

understanding of local linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularities' (p. 537). In addition, Hofstede (1983) recommends a culture sensitive model in this regard, whereas Dhaif (1985) calls for careful investigation of learners' potentials in learning taking into account the learning situation and the learning strategies employed in that situation. This, he notes, involves taking into consideration both what as well as how learners want to learn. For this purpose, Ellis (1996) stresses the need for adapting methodologies to respect and match the cultures of learners. She suggests 'mediating', through which:

> the nature of what eventually takes place in the classroom involves the teacher's ability to both filter the method to make it appropriate to the local cultural norms, and to re-define the teacher-student relationship in keeping with the cultural norms embedded in the method itself (p. 213).

In efforts to explore the appropriateness of different cultures to autonomy, Benson and Voller (1997) argue that the study of factors that impede autonomy in some cultures in the literature looks at how language education supports or impedes the autonomy of social or cultural groups rather than at the autonomy of learners as individuals. Also, Benson (2006) points out that 'debates on autonomy and culture are often less concerned with appropriateness of the principle that learners should take more control of their learning than they are with the appropriateness of methods of teaching and learning associated with this principle' (p. 25). Therefore, studies aimed at investigating the cultural appropriateness of autonomy may well be more feasibly directed at how individual learners accommodate their needs to develop autonomously and take control within certain cultural contexts. In this regard, Smith (2003, p. 130) points out that in contexts where approaches to developing autonomy do not seem to suit learners, it might be the approach itself that should be criticised rather than asserting that learners lack autonomy or that autonomy is invalid in that certain context.

In this part, I argued for the validity of autonomy in different contexts and against the claims that it is inappropriate in non-Western cultures. Normally, this sometimes necessitated taking into account the learners' cultural background for appropriate

forms of autonomy to be realised. This part also presented studies that showed that appropriateness of autonomy in different cultures should not be judged on the basis of assumptions about those cultures but through investigating those contexts to see the form of autonomy that is prevalent. Based on this, in the following part, I argue for a definition of autonomy that acknowledges collaborative learning, attempting to show the validity of autonomy in non-individualist cultures.

2.4.4 Towards a social definition of autonomy

In the previous parts of this section, I reviewed the relationship between autonomy and culture, the claims made about its exclusive link to individualisation and argued for its validity to different cultural contexts. I now argue for the importance of collaboration and social learning in order to unlink the concept of autonomy from being cohered to individualistic work and sometimes being distanced from social aspects of learning. Through this, I try to problematise some definitions for their lack of covering social aspects of learning.

Learning is seen as a social and collaborative process by several educationalists working in the field of learner autonomy, such as Benson (2011), Esch (2009), Smith and Ushioda (2009), Little (1994), Candy (1988) and Riley (1988). In relation to learner autonomy, these authors as well as others emphasise the importance of collaboration to autonomy. For example, Smith and Ushioda (2009) note that autonomy springs from interaction and interdependence where no constituent in the learning process is downgraded (p. 244). In the same vein, Candy (1988) argues that 'knowledge is...socially constructed and accordingly learning is a social process', and 'learners are active makers of meaning...[where] learning itself is an active process of constructing and transforming personal meanings' (p. 74). Hence, Little (1994, p. 435) asserts that 'learner autonomy is the product of interdependence rather than independence'. Interdependence here refers to the tendency of individuals to work in groups and to collaborate in learning. Esch (2009) cautions that emphasis on individualisation can result in 'perpetuating an individualistic culture' (p. 37) and risk letting 'individualism become the driving force behind what is referred to as 'autonomous learning'' (p. 34). Because of this and because of the concerns about

defining autonomy as a capacity of individual learners and confining it to situations where individuals learn on their own and meeting individual needs (Benson, 2006), as well as because of the neglect of social interaction in autonomy (Esch, 2009), there is considerable interest in and emphasis on collaboration in learner autonomy. Moreover, addressing the social aspects in defining autonomy might allow the applicability of this concept in a variety of contexts, and may help the concept to escape the criticism of adhering to independence or individualised work (Benson, 2011). For these reasons, there was a necessity to find contextually appropriate versions of autonomy which has led to the tendency to embracing the social aspect of learning. Therefore, recently, the social aspect of learning has been emphasised and brought to light (Benson, 2007). Benson (2011) refers to this shift of emphasising collaboration in autonomy as providing 'a corrective to the earlier emphasis on the individual working outside the classroom' (p. 16). This corrective is symbolised in shifting the focus to the social aspect of autonomy and emphasising the importance of integration, collaboration and group work for the development of autonomy.

Although autonomy, as widely defined, does not contradict working collaboratively, emphasising collaboration and group work in defining autonomous work allows autonomy to be valid in diverse contexts because it would address the needs and tendencies of different learners and would be more appropriate to collectivist cultures. Moreover, this can be justified by the importance of collaboration that the constructivist and social constructivist theories of learning emphasise as we have seen in section 2.2.3. What needs to be argued for here is the employment of a definition of autonomy that matches and suits the needs of different learners where the learner is not denied his or her right of control, choice, or following certain learning procedures, stresses that the learner shares the control of learning with other learners as well as the teacher, takes into account the assumption that learning does not take place with one individual in a vacuum but rather with a group of individuals, considers and takes into account the universality and variation of autonomy, and recognises the different forms that autonomy can take. The social aspect of autonomy implies that control in the learning process can be maintained through in-group participation and interdependence rather than individually, and that personal work is not sufficient for the practice of autonomous learning if we presume that learning

requires collaboration and participation in social life (Benson, 2011, 1996; Esch, 2009; Little, 1991; Boud, 1988). The emphasis on the social nature of learning therefore pioneers the road to and necessitates a definition of autonomy which is capable of catering for the needs of learners in different contexts and taking in and recognising the importance of group work and collaboration. This is a preferred alternative to a definition that matches the needs or requirements of certain cultures and then claims that autonomy is inapplicable in some other societies. In this sense, Boud (1988) asserts that what is considered autonomous in a certain context might not be regarded as autonomous in another setting. Therefore, for autonomy to be valid in different contexts, it needs to be defined according to different contexts and to serve the versatility of forms that autonomy can take in different settings. In the same vein, Riley (2009) emphasises the importance of appropriate methodologies in different cultural contexts for implementing autonomy and communicative teaching (cf. previous section). Jiménez Raya et al. (2007) suggest that: 'In a very real sense, there cannot be one ''practical theory'' of pedagogy for autonomy that embraces the diversity of discourses and practices we encounter in schools' (p. 52). As a result, Smith (2008, p. 396) notes that 'a belief in the value of interdependent learning in classrooms—combined with a desire to counter prevalent 'individualistic' interpretations of the notion of autonomy—lead leading practitioners to develop the so-called 'Bergen definition''. Therefore, steps have been taken towards recognising the importance of interdependence and social learning in autonomy. Dam's Bergen definition states that:

> Learner autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently *and in cooperation with others, as a socially responsible person. An autonomous learner is an active participant in the social process of learning* (1995, pp. 1-2, added emphasis).

What makes this definition more inclusive and wide is its recognition of the importance of social learning and social responsibility and their importance to

autonomy which also points to the growing interest in socio-cultural theory in the field of autonomy (Sinclair, 2009, p. 185).

However, capacity and willingness alone do not seem to guarantee all the necessary conditions for autonomy. Moreover, this definition seems to neglect freedom from constraints which Trebbi (2008) describes as not a component of autonomy. That is, complete freedom from constraints is not an aspiration of autonomy, neither is it a reasonable goal. Therefore, constraints should be recognised and not treated as a complete hurdle to autonomy. This is because with capacity and willingness, the learner may develop and practise autonomy, whereas without these two components the learner would not be able to behave autonomously no matter how appropriate the environment might be. This is what Legutke and Thomas (1991) assert:

> forms of fostering learner autonomy will vary according to age, institutional constraints and experience. However, given the appropriate guidance and encouragement *all* learners can become more responsible and self-directed – even under the conditions of second language learning (p. 271, original emphasis).

Another definition which addresses the social aspect of learning is presented by Jiménez Raya et al. (2007). They define autonomy as 'the competence to develop as a self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in (and beyond) educational environments, within a vision of education as (inter)personal empowerment and social transformation' (p. 1). What is most relevant in these definitions is their acknowledgment of the social aspect and collaboration in learning. This corrective is essential to understanding the diversity and acceptability of autonomy in various contexts. Smith et al., (2009) describe this 'move to a more socially situated, relational view of learner autonomy…as a salient change' (p. 244).

Therefore, recognising the importance of social aspects of learning and embracing it in the promotion of autonomy can mitigate the criticism of its invalidity and make it more acceptable in different cultures. This is because with the tendency to allowing socialisation as an aspect of autonomy and making autonomy wider open for including different modes of learning allow it to be appropriate for different contexts.

2.4.5 Conclusion

In this section, I presented an argument about the relationship between autonomy and culture, i.e. how the concept of culture has been debated and considered in the argument about the appropriateness of autonomy in different cultures. This debate presented two main views, one noted that autonomy is inappropriate in non-Western cultures, and the other defended the applicability of autonomy in different cultural contexts with different realisations. I then presented the issue of individualisation that accompanied autonomy in its early prevalence and was attached to it and was the principal factor feeding the debate of cultural inappropriateness to autonomy. Next to this, I proceeded with the argument about the validity of autonomy in diverse cultures supporting the argument with research findings from literature. With this line of argument, I concluded this section with discussion for presenting a wider definition of autonomy; that is, a definition that presents opportunities to appropriate forms of autonomy for different cultures through exposing the importance of socialisation and collaboration in learning. This argument was presented here in order to free autonomy from claims of its inappropriateness to some cultures and to argue for its validity in different cultures. In the next section, I further this argument with how autonomy can be fostered and nourished and how teachers can grant opportunities to learners and facilitate for them taking more autonomous stances in their learning.

2.5 Routes to autonomy

2.5.1 Introduction

Wenden (1991) argues that successful, expert, or intelligent learners are those who have learned how to learn. This entails learners knowing learning strategies, knowledge about learning, having the attitudes which enable them to use skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and above all independently of teachers, which means they are autonomous. Therefore, in this section, I explore the ways that might be followed and employed in order to cultivate and enhance autonomy in learners and to empower them to hold responsibility for their learning.

It looks at how autonomy might be supported through different techniques and activities, the role of the teacher in this, the strategies that learners employ in learning which differ according to learners as well as to different contexts, as well as ways to raise learners' awareness and support them in becoming active and responsible learners. This can help demonstrate how autonomy can vary in the forms it takes and therefore how it can be accommodated in different cultures, as well as how it might be developed in contexts which have sometimes been referred to as inappropriate for autonomy.

2.5.2 Autonomy support and autonomy constraint

In this part, I review activities that are meant to support learners to develop and nurture their autonomy as well as those that may lead to impeding autonomy development. In learner-supportive practices, learners can be aided or encouraged to adopt and develop autonomy, whereas autonomy-constraining practices thwart autonomy.

Some argue that there is no way for teaching autonomy or a certain recipe to follow for its implementation (Jiménez Raya et al., 2007; Benson, 2003; Dam, 1995), and that 'fostering autonomy in the classroom cannot really be reduced to techniques or tasks' (Benson, 2003, p. 303), but it involves creating an appropriate learning environment (Dam, 1995). However, the varying styles of learning, attitudes, preferences, and maybe intelligence amongst learners make it inevitable that the teacher will need to work towards encouraging students with versatile activities and tasks with the aim of nurturing and promoting autonomy. For this purpose, literature presents a plethora of autonomy-supportive practices and arguments.

Black and Deci (2000) conceptualise autonomy support as:

> an individual in a position of authority (e.g., an instructor) takes the other's (e.g., a student's) perspective, acknowledges the other's feelings, and provides the other with pertinent information and opportunities for choice, while minimizing the use of pressures and demands (p. 742).

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In the case of language learning, the partner acknowledging perspectives of others, providing choice, encouraging their self-initiation and being responsive to them is normally the teacher towards students. This is because the teacher is sometimes seen as the main and controlling figure in the classroom. Reeve (2006) argues that the supportive quality of a teacher significantly influences the engagement of students in that classroom. Reeve and Jang (2006) argue that an autonomy supportive style is important in an efficient teacher-student relationship, and it significantly determines how learners behave and how active and proactive in the classroom they are. Autonomy support involves identifying, nurturing and developing the inner motivational resources of students. These practices that teachers construct can be efforts to identify students' inner resources such as times where students talk and allowing students to express their views; or they can be teachers' attempts to nurture students' inner resources such as giving them time to work on their own, praising them, providing help and encouragement, being friendly and offering hints to them. Conversely, control involves leading and ordering students to follow teachers' ways of behaving and the practices that teachers decide. These might be made explicit in two senses: they can be understood as leading students to follow a teacher's way of behaving such as giving answers, or not allowing students to share decisions. Other practices can be seen as pressuring language such as giving orders, issuing should/got to statements, and controlling questions (Reeve and Jang, 2006, p. 216).

Reeve, Bolt and Cai (1999) argue that teachers have different styles of teaching. Some of these styles, they note, are autonomy controlling and some are autonomy supportive for students. They argue that the significance of autonomy-supportive styles of teaching derives from their influence on motivation, emotion and performance, and with this, students are perceived to be more likely to stay in school and to show higher academic competence, more creativity, preference to challenge, greater understanding, more positive emotionality, higher degrees of intrinsic motivation, better performance and higher academic achievement. Practices and activities that teachers use to motivate students might be presented on a continuum from highly controlling to highly autonomy supportive (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, and Barch, 2004; Reeve, 1998). For example, if a teacher sets his/her students an agenda and then he/she provides extrinsic motivators and issues

directives, this can be referred to as a controlling approach because students' behaviours and goals are directed and oriented toward a certain end. Conversely, when a teacher nourishes students' intrinsic motivation and encourages them to follow agendas that they have been involved in setting, the approach is autonomy supportive as the goal is to nurture students' autonomous self-regulation.

Both autonomy-supportive and controlling teachers may display similar instructional behaviours such as gaining their students' attention, asking questions, eliciting answers and giving feedback, encouraging persistence, etc. However, the difference is that autonomy-supportive teachers aim to nurture students' initiative while controlling teachers, through introducing directions aim to make students comply with their practices and directions (Reeve, Bolt and Cai, 1999). Such activities and practices vary in range and degrees of granting learners freedom in their learning. The feasibility and influence of autonomy supportive practices and their influence on learning and teaching have been proven in several studies.

Here I provide from the literature a plethora of behaviours seen as a result of autonomy supporting activities: greater interest; less pressure and tension; more cognitive flexibility/ competence; high self-esteem; trust; greater persistence of behavioural changes (Deci and Ryan, 1987); more creativity; better conceptual learning; more positive emotional tone; more intrinsic motivation; and better psychological and physical health (Reeve and Jang, 2006; Deci and Ryan, 1987); and higher academic achievement (Reeve and Jang, 2006). In addition to these, Reeve and Jang (2006) note that research has shown that students in autonomy-supportive classrooms demonstrate higher perceived autonomy as well as greater classroom engagement.

Literature presents a number of activities and practices for fostering and developing autonomy in learners. Reeve, Bolt and Cai (1999) suggest practices such as not giving answers to questions directly, issuing fewer directives to learners, asking questions about what students want to do, responding to questions generated by students, encouraging and supporting students' initiative, and discussing with students their wants. To these, Reeve and Jang (2006) add creating space and opportunities for students to work independently, offering hints when students cannot

progress, encouraging students and praising them for improvement, acting responsibly towards their questions and comments, and considering their perspectives, experiences, and needs, as well as listening when students state their opinions. Also Benson (2003) suggests a number of principles for nurturing autonomous learning. These include the teachers being actively involved in their students' learning without restraining power or decisions, providing various options and resources for learning, offering opportunities for decision making, supporting learners, and encouraging learners' reflection. However, he adds that these practices can vary greatly from one situation to another depending on the teaching-learning context and the teachers' creativity. Also, Dörnyei (2001, p. 100) presents an autonomy-supportive practice that creates chances for group work which is 'encouraging cooperation between students'.

These practices seem to be touching on the small institutional level, i.e. such activities and practices might well be said to work on or be directed toward promoting autonomy in students on the institutional level. In this, Jiménez Raya et al. (2007) point out that 'the setting in which a teacher teaches and a learner learns extends beyond the confines of the school...to the broad socio-economic and cultural contexts which shape the demands made on the education system' (p. 20). Therefore, they (2007) argue that developing autonomy in any context requires analysis of social, ideological and psychological levels. For this, they suggest 'a conceptual framework which enables teachers and teacher educators to make comparative analyses and provides guidance for them in understanding and developing their own *context-specific work*' (p. 19, added emphasis). For such a framework, they refer to one way which is drawing a distinction between the conditions that facilitate or impede the promotion of autonomy and the forces that allow or hinder the promotion of autonomy. Therefore, they necessitate an understanding of the local, national and international setting or context targeted by the promotion of autonomy on the one hand, and the facilitating or impeding forces in that setting or context on the other.

Although there might not be taken for granted procedures or measures that one can follow to be autonomous because autonomy differs from one learner to another and from one context to another, the activities and practices provided in this part could be

valuable in a classroom that aspires for the fostering of autonomy. The role of the teacher in this remains crucial and one on which learner autonomy is considerably dependent because the teacher is an important part of the learning process regardless of how autonomous learners might be.

A question that is pertinent here is whether teacher can teach such practices. Reeve (1998) carried out a study to find out if an autonomy-supportive style can be taught or not. His study, as well as other studies he refers to from the literature, answer in the affirmative. He found that pre-service teachers in his study developed their own activities to nurture autonomy and therefore positively embraced autonomy-supportive views to motivate students, although he notes that pre-service teachers such as the subjects of his study bring prior beliefs about motivating students with them into their teacher training programs, which may agree with or counter the information in the training programs. Reeve, et al. (2004) also assert that an autonomy supportive style can be taught and that trained teachers were far more autonomy-supportive than non-trained teachers. In this, Reeve (2006) argues that an autonomy-supportive style does not mean a set of prescribed techniques and strategies, but presupposes a number of beliefs and assumptions.

As seen here, with the multiple and diverse autonomy-supportive techniques which are argued for as teachable, autonomy becomes eligible for different students in different cultural contexts rather than in certain contexts. Also, since such practices can be taught, in the next part, I discuss the role of teachers and what they can or should do in cultivating autonomy in their learners and what roles they might adopt for allowing learners autonomy in their learning.

2.5.3 The role of teachers in learner autonomy

It is true that there is no one best way to teach, but there are ways in which teachers and learners can create environments that promote engagement, learning, achievement, and wellbeing. Dam (2003) argues that there is sometimes a prevalent *fallacy* that teachers need not change their roles but only those of learners. Counter to this fallacy, Webster, Beveridge, and Reed (1996, p. 39) note that the more

controlling the teachers are, the less free and interactive learners will be, demonstrating the importance of teachers' roles for cultivating learner autonomy.

The teacher's role in autonomous learning requires engagement with the concept of teacher autonomy in the first place. Thavenius (1999) defines teacher autonomy as:

> the teacher's ability and willingness to help learners take responsibility for their own learning. An autonomous teacher is thus a teacher who reflects on her teacher role and who can change it, who can help her learners become autonomous, and who is independent enough to let her learners become independent (p. 160).

This entails the teachers being aware of learners' learning processes as well as of the importance of their own roles; thus becoming aware of what to do in order to encourage learners' autonomy and responsibility, and helping learners understand their strategies. This also entails that teacher autonomy and learner autonomy are interdependent. Autonomous teachers then are those who make use of the curriculum in ways that enable them to create opportunities for negotiation and find spaces for allowing learners to practise autonomy (Benson, 2003).

The teacher's role in autonomous language learning has undergone critical and inevitable changes. The spread of autonomy necessitated a shift in teachers' and learners' roles, sometimes empowering learners at the expense of teachers. However, although an 'autonomous approach to learning requires a transfer of control to the learner' (Voller, 1997, p. 113), empowering learners is not to marginalise teachers or to leave the job solely to learners, in that 'language learning is an interpretative process' (Voller, 1997, p. 113). Still, to create an atmosphere where learners can act as autonomous agents in their learning, the teacher is required to transfer at least part of control to the learners, for it is impossible for both sides to preoccupy this control: 'As teacher control increases, opportunities for student interaction decrease' (Webster et al., 1996, p. 39).

The teacher, therefore, has a major role in cultivating autonomy as students will be more competent, confident, and more creative when they have control of their

learning and are engaged in learning (Reeve, 2006). This, Chan (2000) argues, involves a shift from teacher-centred or teacher-directed teaching to learner-centred or learner-directed learning. Therefore, the development of learner autonomy is by all means dependent in many ways on the role of the teacher and how he/she behaves and allows learners to take on their roles as autonomous learners (Benson, 2007; Little, 1995). Therefore, the importance of teachers' roles in developing and nourishing the autonomy in learners is widely accepted and acknowledged in literature (e.g. Dam, 2003). Dam (2003) argues that teachers who were aware of their roles and potential as autonomous teachers and modified their roles to be autonomous were far more successful. Moreover, unless teachers' roles are recognised and taken into consideration, the misconception that autonomy means leaving learners to do their learning on their own is endorsed. Concluded from this is the salience of teacher autonomy for the nourishment of autonomy in learners as well as the feasibility of autonomous learning.

Sinclair (2000) notes autonomy can sometimes be constrained by institutional and formal modes of teaching and learning. Therefore, teachers' attempts to foster autonomy in their students in the first instance depend on teachers' own judgements of what is possible for them and on their interpretation of the curriculum, which is normally not their own. Therefore, Little (1995) argues that teachers should be made the concern of education in order to develop teachers' roles as mediators, facilitators and organisers of learning. Through encouraging teachers to be autonomous in their own education, they will more likely be successful in promoting learner autonomy in their classrooms (Little, 1995, p. 180). One aspect of focusing on teacher education is, according to Voller (1997), the importance of empowering teachers, because teachers have to realise clearly their roles, beliefs and attitudes towards autonomy. In this, Sheerin (1997) cautions against teachers taking too dominant a role in the course of being facilitators and councillors (two roles of teachers suggested by Voller, 1997), justifying her claims that teachers themselves might not be well prepared for these roles, or that learners are hesitant or not prepared to take their share of responsibility. However, Little (1995) argues that the 'teacher's task is to bring learners to the point where they accept *equal responsibility*' (p. 178, added emphasis), where they become with learners 'co-producers of classroom language

lessons' (Little, 1995, p. 178), rather than empowering teachers at the expense of learners. Also, Lamb (2008) argues for a balance in distributing power in the classroom between the teacher and learners; otherwise, it would simply 'entail a reproduction of power structures' (p. 279). Lamb (2008) sums up what the relationship between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy must involve: the teacher should be aware of ways to develop his/her techniques autonomously, mainly through critical reflection; teachers must share power by empowering learners through creating the appropriate atmosphere and developing learners' capacity for autonomy; they must intervene in ways that guarantee their own as well as their learners' autonomy (2008, p. 279). Therefore, Lamb (2000) calls for allowing learners their voices through a change in both learners' and teachers' roles; that is creating a learning environment where learners are empowered, but rather than disempowering teachers, they must find for themselves spaces and opportunities to manoeuvre, otherwise the process will still be something teachers do to learners (Lamb, 2000). Moreover, Lucantonio (2011) argues that teachers should be cautious about how they provide help to learners and when they should withdraw this help and allow learners to act independently. Therefore, teachers should be contingent in their provision of help to learners and in instilling autonomy in their learners (Webster et al., 1996, p. 44). That is, teachers should adopt flexible teaching approaches that allow for their intrusion but neither distorting learners' opportunities to hold responsibility for their learning, nor instilling in learners the tendency to depend on teachers. In this vein, Thavenius (1999) argues that what teachers need to change for developing learner autonomy is not only their techniques, but also their personalities. An autonomous teacher should allow learners to take responsibility, be co-responsible and allow learners to discover for themselves, adjust the power balance in the classroom, be reflective on what happens in the classroom and assist learners to meet their individual needs (Thavenius, 1999, p. 161). McDevitt (1997) argues that for teachers to be able to help learners to develop autonomy, they must understand the true nature of learner autonomy and 'engage in a more meaningful 'holistic' relationship with the learner' (p. 34).

Therefore, throughout the literature there is emphasis on the importance of teachers' role in fostering and developing autonomy through different roles and terms. The

roles of teachers as suggested by Wright (1987 borrowing Barnes's 1976 terms), can be laid on a continuum between transmission teachers and interpretation teachers. Transmission teachers maintain a high degree of control, whereas interpretation teachers share control and allow learners a degree of responsibility. Voller (1997) notes that in the literature of autonomy, writers are inclined toward the interpretation role of the teacher; this is perhaps because the teachers' control is lessened, though the learners are not left stranded to do their learning on their own.

The literature suggests different roles for the teacher in autonomous language learning. Wright (1987) points out that both teachers and learners have reciprocal and managerial roles, and notes that a teacher must be an evaluator, a guide, a resource, an organiser, and an investigator. Benson (2000) suggests that the teacher can be seen as 'mediating between the learners' right to autonomy and the broader constraints that inhibit the exercise of this right' (pp. 115-116). This definitely presupposes various roles and hard work on the part of the teacher, but it also allows for diversity of forms in which autonomy can be exercised as well as lessens the criticism that autonomy may refer to learning on one's own, in isolation. Breen and Mann (1997) describe deep attributes and explicit roles that an autonomous teacher needs in order to successfully promote autonomy in the classroom. Attributes include self-awareness, belief and trust, and desire. Explicit roles are termed classroom actions and include six characteristics: being a resource; sharing decision; facilitating collaborative evaluation; managing the risks; being a patient opportunist; and getting support from colleagues or more experienced teachers. In this sense Benson (2003) notes that the teacher is often the one who presents tasks and activities even in autonomous classrooms. Nonetheless, how the teacher presents these tasks and activities significantly influences the classroom (p. 299).

Reeve and Jang (2006) note that when teachers act in a way that is supportive to autonomy, they 'help students to develop a sense of congruence between their classroom behavior and their inner motivational resources'; when teachers are controlling, they 'have students put aside their inner motivational resources and instead adhere to a teacher-centered agenda' (p. 210). In order to make students comply with teachers' agenda, they provide extrinsic motives and external goals,

give orders, stress the importance of external evaluations, and influence students' ways of thinking, feeling and behaving according to their own agenda and programs. Deci and Ryan (1987) point out that teachers who are in favour of supporting autonomy tend to create a classroom environment that encourages self-determination; while other teachers inclined to control classrooms are oriented towards creating a controlling classroom contexts.

One of the ways through which learner autonomy can be encouraged is equipping learners with strategies that they can employ to be more responsible for their learning.

2.5.4 Learner strategies

The learning strategies that learners employ in their learning are a very important factor in influencing whether they do or do not take control of their learning because these strategies form the modes of learning that learners follow. Here I first present definitions and types of strategies and then suggest from literature their importance and how they can be employed to encourage autonomy in learners.

White (1995) defines learner strategies as 'the operations or processes which learners deploy to learn the TL [Target Language]' (p. 210), and Cohen (2011) defines them as the processes and actions that the learner consciously chooses to perform tasks. He (2011) adds that learners' choice of their strategies is important because choice is what characterises strategies as important for learners to operate actively and independently (p. 7), and the conscious selection of these processes means that learners are aware of what they follow in learning.

Learner strategies have been divided into two main sets. The first set is what Chamot and O'Malley (1990) classify as metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies 'are higher order executive skills that may entail planning for, monitoring, or evaluating the success of a learning activity' (p. 44). These strategies include planning, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, self-monitoring, problem identification, and self-evaluation. Cognitive strategies are lower in level as they 'operate directly on incoming information,

manipulating it in ways that enhance learning' (p. 44). Social/affective strategies 'involve either interaction with another person or ideational control over effect' (p. 45). Social/affective strategies are applicable to a wide range of tasks. Examples of social/affective strategies are cooperation, asking for clarification, and initiation of talk.

The second set of learning strategies is Oxford's (1990) direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies include memory strategies such as memorising and retrieving new information; cognitive strategies for the comprehension and use of the language such as practising, retrieving and sending messages, analysing, and creating structures; compensation strategies such as guessing and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. Indirect strategies include metacognitive strategies such as centring, planning and evaluating learning; affective strategies such as lowering anxiety, encouraging oneself, and taking emotional temperature; and social strategies which include asking questions for clarification, cooperating and working with others, and empathising with others (Oxford, 1990, p. 17).

The purpose of research into learning strategies for Wenden (1986) is to 'help less effective learners' (p. 199), for Oxford (1990) they are 'tools for active, self-directed involvement' (p. 1), and they 'help learners take control of their learning and become more proficient' (p. 22). The link, therefore, between the development of learner autonomy and strategy use is widely acknowledged and supported both through linking it to metacognitive strategies (White, 1995), and to learner strategies in general in that they help enhance and develop learners' ability to take responsibility for and towards their learning (Cohen, 2011). Similarly, White (1995) sees that knowledge of strategy presupposes the practice of autonomy:

> the ability to exercise autonomy requires the learner to have
> developed an understanding of the nature of language learning and
> of his/her role in that process, and as part of this to have developed
> an appropriate repertoire of language learning strategies (p. 209).

Through this elaboration of autonomy and learning strategies, White (1995) makes the link between autonomy and strategy use clear. White (1995) proposes that:

'autonomy in language learning results from the way in which, and the extent to which, the learner manages his/her interaction with the TL, rather than from the use of any specific set of cognitive strategies' (p. 217). Therefore, learners require an amount of awareness of the strategies they may employ in their learning through strategy instruction in order to select from them. Learners might not employ strategies regularly and might employ different strategies that may not be applicable to different learners (Sinclair, 2000). Therefore, rather than teaching learners certain strategies, they should be helped and encouraged in using diverse strategies and their awareness raised of different strategies so they choose strategies appropriate to themselves and the context in which they are working. This also makes the teacher's role a facilitator and negotiator who does not impose on learners certain roles to play or modes to follow.

For teachers to help their students employ appropriate strategies, Jiménez Raya (1998) recommends using strategies implicit in the material, make these strategies explicit to students, as not all students understand strategies contained in materials used, and foster in students reflection about learning because having a strategy is not sufficient but students need to be or made aware of how to apply it. Dickinson (1992) also notes the importance of learning strategies—both cognitive and metacognitive— for learner training. Here, learners might be helped and guided to ask themselves questions about the task, the type of the task, and whether they are familiar with such task type. Learners should be helped and made aware of how to employ metacognitive strategies to enable them to identify learning tasks, select appropriate cognitive strategies, monitor the use of cognitive strategies, check the task is complete and assess the effectiveness of their learning. Through such awareness learners would be able to manage and direct their learning independently.

Cohen (2011) provides a number of procedures that teachers can employ to enhance learners' knowledge and use of strategies; in these, the teachers:

-describe, model and present to students examples of strategies that are useful to students;

-encourage learners to give examples from students' own experience;

-discuss the strategies, their use, their effectiveness, their evaluations with students in small groups or whole class;

-encourage students to employ different strategies and opt from them;

-make strategies into everyday class materials, integrating them implicitly and explicitly into the tasks, and this way the teachers contextualise the practice of strategies for their students.

-allow their learners to choose their preferred strategies (pp. 138-139).

Through these, learners will learn to learn in the most effective way; learn to enhance their comprehension and production of the target language; learn to continue learning on their own and use the target language after they finish schooling (Cohen, 2011, p. 139).

However, teachers should support their learners and raise their awareness of the importance of strategies they may employ to take more responsibility for their learning. That is, learners should be encouraged and helped to use strategies but they should be left to opt the strategies that match their levels and abilities rather than impose certain strategies on them. This way we can benefit from the diversity of forms of strategies to help learners operate in learning in general and in taking responsibility for their learning in particular. Therefore, in the course of fostering autonomy in learners, learners might be helped and encouraged to take on their autonomy through making explicit for them these strategies and aiding them to employ the appropriate strategies for them to be responsible for their learning, so that autonomy would be accommodated according to different contexts as well as different learners' needs.

Another way through which autonomy can be fostered in learners is through encouraging them to reflect on their attitudes and beliefs towards taking their roles as active learners.

2.5.5 Attitudes and beliefs

Attitudes and beliefs are closely related concepts which, according to Wenden (1992, p. 52), are linked together, with attitudes defined as 'valued beliefs' and beliefs forming a cognitive part of attitudes. They will therefore be treated as overlapping and commented on together.

Learners' beliefs are important because they have been found to influence learning and achievement (Cotterall, 1999), as well as because these beliefs either facilitate or hinder learners' development of autonomy (Cotterall, 1995). Wenden (1991) refers to definitions of attitudes from the literature as ''learned motivations', 'valued beliefs', 'evaluations', 'what one believes is acceptable' or 'responses oriented towards approaching or avoiding'' (p. 52). Wenden (1991) also notes that attitudes have a cognitive component which in language learning could refer to learners' beliefs about their roles in learning; an evaluative component referring to learners' attitude towards whether they like, agree and approve of the notion of taking responsibility for learning; and a behavioural component which signifies that learners with a positive attitude towards taking responsibility will try to adopt an autonomous role in learning.

Victori and Lockhart (1995) distinguish between 'insightful beliefs about language learning processes' which facilitate developing autonomously; and 'negative or limited beliefs' which in turn can result in learners holding negative beliefs about autonomy, leading to poor cognitive performance and classroom anxiety (p. 225).

They add that:

> If students develop or maintain misconceptions about their own learning, if they attribute undue importance to factors that are external to their own action and do not see themselves as causes of their own learning, they are not likely to adopt a responsible and active attitude in their approach to learning and may never become autonomous (Victori and Lockhart, 1995, p. 225).

Therefore, they (1995) suggest that students' awareness of their weaknesses and strengths should be enhanced so that learners develop appropriate beliefs towards their learning. In the same sense, Wenden (1986) notes that in order to discover the characteristics of successful learners, we need to discover 'what ...students believe or know about their learning, and to provide activities that would allow students to examine these beliefs and their possible impact on how they approach learning' (p. 199). Wenden (1986) points out that teachers are required to discover their learners' beliefs and knowledge about their learning and design activities for students that match their beliefs and consider the impact of these activities on how learners learn. This, however, should not be in a way that enforces on learners certain modes or ways in their learning. Rather, teachers should seek to find out their learners' attitudes towards learning and therefore take them into consideration when encouraging the development of these learners' attitudes towards taking control of their learning. Wenden (1991) argues that learners need to be encouraged to re-orient their beliefs and attitudes towards taking responsibility for their learning. This includes psychological preparation of learners to help them become willing and accept this mode of learning. Psychological preparation also means helping learners to develop self-confidence in their readiness to be independent learners.

Scharle and Szabo (2000) suggest that teachers need to work on helping learners change their attitudes towards adopting autonomous roles moving through raising their awareness of the feasibility of taking responsibility for their learning, then helping them enter the stage of changing attitudes that they may be holding on learning. It is a long process as it involves moving from understanding to practising, especially with learners in highly teacher-controlled environments. Teachers can employ activities related to motivating their students, use learning strategies, community building where learners know each other and work with each other, and encourage self-monitoring where learners are convinced and encouraged to monitor their learning and their progress. Such activities can be employed to alter learners' attitudes and beliefs towards their roles as well as those of the teacher. Therefore, they can be more prepared to exhibit readiness to adopt autonomous roles.

Wenden (1991) notes that learners' attitudes towards learning and their roles are shaped by whether they are aware of strategic knowledge. Therefore, she presents plans that help learners become aware of strategies and hence alter their attitudes and beliefs. For example, learners' beliefs about learning autonomously and the reasons for their beliefs might be investigated, learners are then involved in planning their learning content followed by discussions of topics they choose where prior knowledge about topics under discussion is recalled. This is followed by presenting new ways of thinking to students—this most probably involves presenting to students modes of learning autonomously and instilling habits of less dependence on teachers. Learners are helped to comprehend the new information, to elaborate on it and to relate it to prior knowledge about learning. Now, learners are invited and aided to apply this new knowledge to their learning and to devise plans to approach their learning differently. This way, learners are persuaded to change negative attitudes towards their learning and are brought to new ways to approach their learning which they were unfamiliar with because of their dependence on their previous modes of learning. This will potentially be most effective because learners are involved in planning and working on their learning through which they develop new and different attitudes and beliefs towards learning rather than information being introduced to them crudely without them being involved in developing it. Wenden (1991) also presents techniques in which learners can be involved in changing their attitudes and beliefs towards learning. She (1991) suggests persuasive communication, which revolves around convincing learners of the feasibility of taking responsibility for their learning and helping them believe in their capabilities for doing so. She also suggests getting learners to elaborate on their experiences and finding differences between them and good language learners, on how they might imitate good language learners and discuss with them what strategies good language learners use and cue them to employ such strategies.

Wenden (1991) notes that autonomous learners have the attitudes and beliefs that imply their willingness to be responsible for their learning and confidence in their ability to manage their learning. She adds that these attitudes should be taken into account to help learners become more autonomous; otherwise, attempts to cultivate autonomy will not be successful. However, such techniques to developing learners'

autonomous abilities through altering their attitudes and beliefs to accept taking more responsibility for their learning should not be forced on them in ways that do not take into consideration their capabilities or abilities. Learners should be encouraged to take more autonomous roles through helping them adopt positive attitudes of their potential and raising their awareness of the feasibility of being in control of their learning.

Therefore, because different students hold different beliefs about learning and about their abilities, and as Wenden (1991) notes that these beliefs of students should be taken into account to help learners become more autonomous, there should be respect and consideration to the diversity of these beliefs among learners and therefore for the sort and degree of autonomy that they wish or can achieve or exercise. One dimension of adjusting learners' attitudes and beliefs is raising their awareness of their abilities.

2.5.6 Raising learners' awareness

Raising learners' awareness of their abilities and the activities they may follow to adopt autonomous roles in learning can be one way for enhancing autonomy. Wenden (1991) notes that without awareness of how they learn, learners will persist in following old patterns, beliefs and behaviours.

Scharle et al. (2000) argue that for students to be active agents in learning they need to recognise the importance of their roles in learning. Success in their learning depends very much on being responsible learners. Nonetheless, it is very much the teachers' role to cultivate in their learners this sense and help them realise their responsibility in learning. Therefore, Scharle et al. (2000) note that to foster learner autonomy, it is necessary to encourage learners to develop a sense of responsibility and to adopt active roles in making decisions about their learning. In this, raising students' awareness of their needs, ways of learning, and their abilities can be one of the ways to boost learners to adopt autonomous roles. In this, Trebbi (2008) holds the teacher responsible for raising learners' awareness of their roles in autonomous learning.

Scharle et al. (2000) note that awareness and reflection are necessary for developing responsibility in learners. They (2000) suggest three stages for fostering autonomy in learners: raising awareness, changing attitudes and transferring roles. The process of raising students' awareness refers to making them 'bring the inner processes of their learning to the conscious level of their thinking', bringing these learners to discoveries such as 'Wow, this is interesting!' and 'So, that's the way it is!' (p. 9). This stage is then practised and nourished to help learners enter the stage of changing attitudes. The stage of changing learners' attitudes is complemented by transferring roles to the learners. This involves demanding work on the part of the teacher and provides learners with an amount of freedom. Activities in these stages include collecting information about students and then deciding the areas in which awareness raising is most needed. Again, teachers can employ activities such as 'community building' which encourages learners to know each other and to demonstrate to them the importance of listening to and cooperating with others both in pairs and groups and to help them learn about the views of others, and self-monitoring which helps learners take control of their learning. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) argue for employing workshops for raising teachers' and students' awareness of ways to practise active roles and to enhance their autonomy. Furthermore, Smith (2003) recommends:

> co-creating with students optimal conditions for the exercise of their
> own autonomy, engaging them in reflection on the experience, and
> in this manner (rather than via transmission of a 'good learning'
> strategy syllabus), developing their capacities, which are then
> brought to bear further exercise of learner autonomy (p. 131).

Creating such an atmosphere and conditions can help make learners aware of strategies they may employ, familiarise them with different modes of learning they may follow to take autonomous roles in learning, and above all help them discover in themselves the abilities that might have been drowned by the domination of the teacher. Therefore, learners become aware of different ways for learning and the different roles they can adopt for performing autonomously. However, raising learners' awareness of the different roles they may play for taking more control in

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their learning can be argued to be counter to autonomy in that learners may be made to follow certain activities or strategies that the teacher teaches or recommends to them. However, autonomy being sometimes referred to as not innate (Sinclair, 2000; Victori and Lackhart, 1995), and learners should be encouraged and assisted in developing autonomous stances in their learning means they need an amount of support, encouragement and perhaps guidance in order to adopt autonomous roles. The teachers' role remains of a facilitator and helper to learners in order to discover ways through which they take more autonomous roles in their learning rather than teaching them how to be autonomous. This is also shown in the next part where teachers train learners; however, I present training as a way for teachers to help, encourage and facilitate to learners taking more responsible roles in their learning.

2.5.7 Learner training

This part looks at the issue of learner training and how it is employed as a way for helping learners develop autonomy. It also presents some techniques that can be used to help learners how to take more control of their leaning.

The importance of helping learners learn how to learn is crucial for making language learning effective and successful (Brown, 2007). Smith (2003) notes that autonomy in its weak version is a capacity that students lack and which they can develop when properly trained and prepared for. Kumaravadivelu (2003) points out that: 'Clearly, learners' ability to take charge of their own learning can be made possible only if they are trained to identify and use appropriate strategies' (p. 137). This encouragement of learners is usually known as 'learner training' or 'learning to learn' (Sinclair, 2000, p. 7), which Benson (n. d.) notes that it has become an inextricable part of language learning and; therefore, defines it as: 'an area of methodology where students are encouraged to focus on their learning'. In this, the aim of learner training is to 'provide learners with the alternatives from which to make informed choices about what, how, why, when and where they learn', as well as 'to provide learners with the ability, that is strategies and confidence, to take on more responsibility for their own learning' (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989, pp. 2-3). Therefore, Jiménez Raya (1998) notes that learner training is important in that it

'leads to improved performance and greater effectiveness by involving learners in experiential and reflective activities' (p. 24). It is also important because, firstly, different learners have different styles and use different strategies in learning and, secondly, making learners aware of language and language learning makes learners more capable and competent in managing their learning. More justification comes from the fact that not all learners have the capacity to adopt autonomy in their learning as well as from Dickinson's (1992) argument that 'the goal of learner training is ... to help all learners, and especially those who are less effective, to become more active and more independent in their learning' (p. 18). Moreover, because learner autonomy is commonly referred to as not necessarily innate (Sinclair, 2000; Victori and Lackhart, 1995), and what differentiates effective second language learners from others is being active and independent in learning (Dickinson, 1992), McDevitt (1997) states that there is wide agreement in the literature in the field of education on the need to prepare learners for autonomy (p. 36).

In both views on autonomy, whether it is innate or not, training seems to be a necessity or at least a boost for developing autonomy in learners. If autonomy is not innate, it seems to be a precondition to provide learners with training for developing autonomous learning; if autonomy is innate, training may work as a trigger and a consolidating factor for learners to develop autonomously, as Ho and Crookall (1995) put it: 'only by taking steps towards autonomy and exercising that autonomy will the learner be and become autonomous' (p. 242). Therefore, a degree of training seems to be necessary to put learners on track to develop their autonomy.

Sinclair (2000) notes that innate autonomy can be constrained by institutional, formal modes of teaching and learning. Learner training is employed in several aspects of language learning; e.g. in developing learner autonomy (Sinclair, 2000; Nunan, 1997a; Ho and Crookall, 1995; Wenden, 1991; Ellis and Sinclair, 1989), offering learning strategies to learners (Nunan, 1997a; Victori and Lockhart, 1995; Wenden, 1991; Ellis and Sinclair, 1989), increasing motivation (Nunan, 1997a), preparing learners to develop autonomy (Benson, n. d.; Victori and Lockhart, 1995) and

helping learners learn more effectively and continue learning beyond institutional levels (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989).

It can be argued that it is against autonomy to train learners to be autonomous, which can imply controlling their modes of learning. Therefore, preparation and training of learners should take the form of collaboration between learners and teachers rather than making learners employ certain strategies or modes which may or may not apply to them. In this, Ellis and Sinclair (1989) argue that learner training might be partly teacher directed and partly learner directed. The teacher will have to provide information about language and language learning; however, the teacher is not to be prescriptive, but negotiating and counselling, and suggesting alternatives to learners when they seem unable to proceed, and the learner may opt to take these suggestions or not. Ellis and Sinclair (1989, p.10) present steps for helping learners 'learn how to learn':

•discussing with learners and taking their opinions and views on the learning content and the methodology;

•negotiating with learners information about language and language learning and making this information available to learners;

•listening to learners and helping them reflect on language and language learning;

•raising learners' awareness of different learning strategies;

•enabling learners to practise language learning by creating an appropriate environment;

•helping learners express their opinions and perspectives and make conclusions about learning;

•guiding and providing advice to individual learners.

In training learners to learn, Dickinson (1992) argues for providing psychological preparation which means encouraging students to alter their attitudes towards their

own roles and towards the teachers' roles and making them aware and confident that they are able to be more active and independent; and methodological preparation which refers to offering opportunities to students to adopt more independent roles and teaching them how to be more active and independent in learning (p. 18). Therefore, he notes that these two preparations can lead to the development of autonomy in learners.

Dickinson (1992) notes that: 'One way of giving control training is to teach learners a procedure for selecting and monitoring the use of learning strategies' (p. 22). The teacher here should give learners *advice* on the use of strategies they might employ for their learning. Dickinson refers to examples of Chamot and O'Malley's (1990) techniques that teachers may use for training learners to use learning strategies. These are 'cooperation' through allowing or making learners work with their peers on learning tasks or seeking information, etc.; 'resourcing', that is advising and helping learners to use dictionaries, textbooks and other reference sources; and 'note taking' where teachers ask and show learners to note down key words and concepts that help them in their performance of language tasks. These three techniques are the most frequently used according to Dickinson (1992). However, strategies or ways in which teachers train learners to autonomous learning could vary according to contexts as well as individual teachers and/or learners.

Dickinson (1992) adds another aspect where learners might be trained and encouraged in order to be more active and successful learners. This is 'information seeking' which is meant to encourage learners to ask questions in order to obtain information, clarification and confirmation of their hypotheses. The teacher here should be cautious to answer questions in a kind and encouraging manner in order not to put off students' curiosity and courage to ask questions. Another issue in which learners could be trained is assessment. Dickinson (1992) notes that learners could be put in pairs or groups and shown how to assess their achievement through discussing what they have learned, or their performance through comparing their work in different occasions. The teacher for example might help them to prepare a checklist for assessing what they have learned or how well they have worked on things or lessons. Students can apply these criteria to themselves as well as to their

colleagues. The teacher here should provide supported practice in order to make students confident as well as aware enough in order to accomplish assessment. For example, the teacher might allow students opportunities and time and encourage them to correct themselves in activities. Jiménez Raya (1998) recommends training learners to keep diaries which raise their awareness of cognitive abilities, help them be more effective learners, facilitate their planning of what they do, help them diagnose their problems, evaluate and reflect on their learning. In sum, he states that it helps them to 'achieve a higher degree of autonomy' (p. 25). He (1998) conceives the teacher as the main agent who could enable or help learners to adopt such practice and therefore to learn more effectively and autonomously.

Voller (1997) argues that the risk with learner training is that it may still impose on learners the authoritative role of the teacher through presenting to students the designated most efficient ways to learn a language. Also, Benson (n.d.) criticises learner training in that it implicitly 'moulds' learners according to certain patterns to which they must conform. However, in training learners to learn, rather than be an authority imposing his/her instructions on learners, the teacher should help and encourage learners choose the activities and strategies that the students themselves feel would help and benefit them to be more autonomous. These should be applicable to the student's age, level, inclination and interest in order to attract the student's attention and be acceptable for him/her. So the teacher should help and guide learners to reflect on their learning and make them aware of different aspects of their learning (Jiménez Raya, 1998).

In spite of its prominence in education in the last three or four decades, there has been some criticism to autonomy such as its inappropriateness to some cultures and the roles of teachers and learners. Sometimes autonomy is prescribed with certain activities or procedures that teachers are advised to follow to make their learners autonomous. However, these autonomy supportive activities should be seen as procedures to *help* learners take on their autonomy and start learning by themselves rather than to follow the procedures their teachers prescribe. This is mainly because assuming certain activities or modes of learning that learners should follow can deny learners their rights to be autonomous.

Another important point which is sometimes controversial in the debate about autonomy is the role of the teacher. Learner autonomy is sometimes thought to mean assigning a negative role to the teacher leaving learners to work alone. However, in autonomous learning, the teacher's role is neither authoritative nor negative. That is an autonomous teacher should neither be a leader forcing learners to follow his/her orders nor withdraw entirely from working on lessons. The teacher has an important role which can be a helper, a counsellor, a guide among many different roles through which the teacher can help learners to be autonomous. In this regard, modes through which learners can be aided and apprenticed to be autonomous might take the form of instructing them to follow certain modes and strategies of learning. This way, learners might develop learning habits that have been dictated to them by others rather than initiated or opted by themselves. However, as I have just argued, teachers should adopt roles of helpers to facilitate for learners developing learning strategies that best suit them rather than strategies that teachers think are appropriate to learners. Amongst the teachers' tasks can be raising learners' awareness of the importance and feasibility of taking autonomous roles in their learning, helping them adopt positive roles to autonomy and training them to adopt autonomous roles in their learning but still without enforcing certain learning strategies or modes of learning that might not be appropriate to learners.

Also, it can be time consuming to allow learners to be autonomous. Therefore, a lot of class time might be allotted for work from which learners do not benefit considerably for their lesson content. Learner autonomy also assumes hard work on the part of the teacher and it is not easy to convince learners to work autonomously if they do not want to do so. However, one aim of education in autonomous learning is creating independent, active, participatory learners and individuals in the society (e.g. Benson, 2006), and learner autonomy can be justified on this basis.

Another point that is controversial in the field of autonomy is its definition. Benson (2011) points out that 'any definition of autonomy that attempts to cover every potential aspect of control over learning risks becoming too long for practical use' (p. 61). That is, there is no definition of autonomy that accommodates the concept for different cultural contexts and learning modes. Therefore, there have been

attempts to enrich and enlarge the concept through presenting different versions and dimensions which then can facilitate publicising it to different learners' and contextual requirements.

One of the most prominent criticisms of learner autonomy in literature is the claim that it is inappropriate to certain cultures. However, being flexible enough for different learners and contexts, learner autonomy can be realised according to learners' requirements, levels and tendencies in learning. Also, learner autonomy is valid not only for short term goals but also for long term ones where the goal is creating individuals who are active, critical and participatory in their societies. Indeed, one of the important arguments that make learner autonomy an eligible goal of education is the preparation of learners to life-long learning and they therefore would not seek dependence on teachers or others for their learning. Learner autonomy is also widely seen to enhance learners' motivation for learning by allowing them to be active agents and therefore it offers greater opportunities for learning. Therefore, in spite of such criticisms to learner autonomy, it remains a valid goal of education since the principal aim of education should be creating independent learners who are able to continue learning beyond schools and be active participants in their societies (Benson, 2006; McDevitt, 1997; Legutke et al., 1991). Also, in the era of technology and the increase in demand for learning languages, autonomy can indeed offer solutions to this. Another rationale for the importance of learner autonomy is, as Littlewood (1999) notes, teachers will not always be available to accompany and help students. Therefore, it is necessary that learners learn to learn on their own or with little help from others. Moreover, criticism such as that directed towards its inappropriateness can be refuted by the facts that different modes of learning suit different learners according to the learners' own tendencies and needs as well as by the different realisations that autonomy can take in different cultural contexts and according to different learners' requirements in learning.

2.5.8 Conclusion

This section has presented how learners might be prepared and aided in becoming more autonomous. It has argued for the importance of creating an appropriate atmosphere in order to provide the opportunities which support learners to act autonomously. These included arguing for the autonomy-support practices that might be provided to learners to act autonomously, considering critically the role of the teachers and what they can do and offer to learners in order to help them be autonomous, understanding the importance of strategies and how learners might be helped to follow strategies that can aid them to develop autonomously. It then showed the importance of attitudes and beliefs of learners to learning and how these should be considered in order to develop an appropriate learning atmosphere for learners, and argued for raising learners' awareness of their abilities and different techniques. It concluded with learner training and how learners should be helped to develop their autonomy through providing help and creating suitable environment for them in order to develop their autonomy according to their needs and tendencies. The argument in these was in favour of helping learners and raising their awareness of their roles and the use of strategies that are applicable to them rather than teaching them the strategies they might employ. Therefore, rather than dictating to learners certain roles that they may play to be autonomous, it is argued that learners should be helped and encouraged to discover for themselves the roles they can adopt in order to be more responsible for their learning. Teachers have a central and critical role in this. That is, teachers should adopt roles of facilitators and encouragers who set for their students an environment that allows them to be responsible for their learning in ways that suit these learners and which they themselves develop, with the help and encouragement of teachers. Therefore, it is crucial that the teacher takes the role of facilitator, encourager and awareness raiser rather than controller and authority.

Before I proceed to presenting the research methodology of the study, I would like to and find it beneficial to present the theoretical framework upon which the study is based. It is also because data collection in ethnographic research can be based on a theoretical framework which guides and helps researchers to focus on certain aspects of situations and on evidence that is significant in answering research questions.

Autonomy is multidimensional (Benson, 2010; Sinclair, 2000), is a capacity (Benson, 2010; Sinclair, 2000) that learners might not exhibit and it might not be observable, and is not a static state (Benson, 2010), therefore it is not easy if at all possible to measure it, though Benson (2010) believes it can be measured. However, I think it is not possible to measure autonomy principally because there are no set of practices that learners do or beliefs they hold so that they are judged to be autonomous. I believe it can be investigated and described, and along with what learners do and believe we can match their preferences and inclinations with their behaviours, which might then describe the type of autonomy they practise. Therefore, my concern in this study is neither to measure autonomy nor to observe it as I do not hold the belief that autonomy is symbolised in certain procedures or practices, and this is why I chose to use interviews along with observations.

In the context of this study, the passivity of some learners and teachers sometimes being in control of lessons with the education policy encouraging learners to be responsible for their learning have led me to hold an inquisitive position about the sources of such discrepancies. That is, since education policy seems to recognise the rights of students to be allowed spaces in learning and to follow the modes they prefer and create their preferred learning environment, why is it that the classroom environment appears to be plagued by a 'banking model' (Freire, 2005) type of relationship and mode of learning and teaching, and mostly domination by the teacher of the learning-teaching process? Therefore, the study also aims to explore the participants' perceptions of education policy and if there is discrepancy between education policy aspects and classroom practices. Also, a relevant point to this is that the relationship between autonomy and the Communicative Approach is strong, which is another investigatory aspect of the study (Allwright and Hanks, 2009). Being introduced in the context of this study around the year 2000, the communicative language teaching and learning has been described to be limited by different constraints such as individual, contextual and cultural factors (Shihiba, 2011).

Moreover, the nature of learner autonomy with its diversity both in forms and degrees (Sinclair, 2008)—which I see qualifies it to be accommodated for in

different contexts and cultures— has sometimes been denied and autonomy deemed inappropriate in some cultural contexts, primarily Eastern cultures and non-Western cultures in general. So the study aimed to look at what learner autonomy means and how it is realised in the cultural context of the study and to see if such accusations of inappropriateness of autonomy are valid. These have set the scene for the investigation in this study where I found it best to adopt what I would like to call 'an approach for a truth' because it allowed me to live the experience rather than be told or reported about. The most appropriate methods I found in order to delve into this context and to reach one aspect of *a* truth is through the use of observations and interviews. The model I employed to investigate and analyse the situation in the context is Oxford's (2003) four-fold model: the technical perspective with focus on the physical situation; the psychological perspective focusing on the characteristics of learners; the socio-cultural perspectives I and II with focus on mediated learning; and the political-critical perspective which focuses on ideologies, access, and power structure. I employed this model as a framework for approaching the concept of learner autonomy in this context because it seems to cover different dimensions of autonomy, different modes of control, and, most particularly in this study, it recognises the mediation and collaboration aspects of autonomous learning. I also used this model here in order to present a fair account that neither conceals aspects of autonomy that are present in the context nor employs a framework that might be biased to present the context as an ideal land for autonomy. During data collection and analysis, I tried to focus the categories in the interviews and observations to serve the themes in the research questions and to provide data that are relevant to the focus of the study. Therefore, the categories of analysis were related to Oxford's (2003) framework in order to help present an analysis that is relevant to a form of autonomy peculiar to the context of this study rather than mimic a form of autonomy from an alien context.

Chapter 3 **Research Methodology:**

> Words, which are by far the most common form of qualitative data, are a speciality of humans and their organizations. Narratives, accounts and other collections of words are variously described as 'rich', 'full' and 'real', and contrasted with the thin abstractions of number. Their collection is often straightforward. They lend verisimilitude to reports (Robson, 2011, pp. 465-466).

I chose to foreword this chapter with this quotation because it shows how 'words' are used in the processes of data collection and analysis in this study, and that they are a 'speciality of humans' which cannot be replaced by computers for analysis.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the research questions and presents an overall account of the research methodology of the current study. It discusses the research paradigm, the case study approach to research, as well as ethnographic methods of observations, interviews and informal interviews as research tools for carrying out this study. This study seeks to investigate how the teachers and learners see their own as well as each others' roles in teaching and learning, and how they carry out teaching and learning in the classroom. I explored the participants' perceptions before their practices as they could provide me with insights into what I might focus on during observations. In order to achieve this, the study adopted a case study approach employing ethnographic methods for investigating concepts and practices concerning learner autonomy in a case study of a secondary school in Misurata City in Libya. This chapter also presents the methods of data collection and analysis employed for the study, discusses the issues of trustworthiness and ethical issues, how the site of the study has been approached and elaborates on the process of data collection.

3.2 Research questions

Mason (2002) notes that: 'Often, qualitative researchers will use existing literature, research and theory as a background or springboard for launching their own research in ways which connect it with current debates' (p. 20). As has been discussed in the previous chapters, the debates about inappropriateness of autonomy in some contexts led to asking the following questions for investigating the situation in the Libyan context. This study poses these questions in order to elicit teachers' and learners' perceptions, opinions and ideas and explore their practices with regard to teaching and learning, and to understand the status quo, i.e. to diagnose what constrains or facilitates the teaching and learning process, and above all, whether any form of autonomy exists, and how it is realised within the context of this study and this is where the strength of this study lies. This way, it avoids being accused of any imposition of learner autonomy or any bias for or against any theory of learning; as Woods (1986) points out: 'Ethnographers thus try to rid themselves of any presuppositions they might have about the situation under study' (p. 5).

One of the features of qualitative research is that it depends on and provides personal accounts and views of the researcher. These, although they might be criticised as being too subjective, are supposed to provide accounts from within the context studied. In this research, I provide interpretations, i.e. reflections on what I have seen and heard, and reports of the happenings in the context; all supported by verbatim quotations. The questions asked for this purpose are formulated in sets as follow:

The first set of questions is related to teachers' and learners' perceptions and beliefs about how teaching is carried out.

1-How do teachers and learners perceive their roles in the learning process?
   A- How do learners and teachers interpret their roles and each others' roles in learning and teaching?
   B- How do these interpretations relate to learner autonomy?
   C- How do learners and teachers think their interpretations and perceptions of learner autonomy might affect learning and teaching?

This first set of questions aims to explore the participants' perceptions of their roles and each others' roles, their perceptions of good language learning and teaching and how these perceptions relate to autonomous learning. The aim here is to understand their interpretations of their roles and understand their roles in relation to each other. Interpretations and perceptions here refers to the participants' understanding and expectations of their roles and each others' roles; that is how they perceive their roles and relationships and learner autonomy.

The second set looks at how learner autonomy is manifested in the cultural context of the study, i.e. what forms of autonomy learners and teachers practise in the cultural context of the study.

2- What type of relationship between learners and teachers is prevalent in the classroom and what affects it?
  A- How, if there is any, is autonomy manifested in the teachers' and learners' practices and relationships?
  B- What constraints relating to learner autonomy affect teaching and learning and the teacher-learner relationship?

The second set explores the participants' behaviours and practices in relation to learning and teaching and the teacher-student relationship. Through this, these questions explore how autonomy is manifested in the participants' practices and behaviours. This set also looks at the constraints that influence the participants' opportunities to behave according to their preferences.

3- Because of the regime change in Libya, which occurred mid-way through my research and which will potentially affect education policy there, a pedagogical question became pertinent in the course of asking the previous questions:
  A- In the light of the Government regime change in Libya, are changes to classroom and learner-teacher relationships expected, and if there are any, are they related to any form of autonomy?

The third set presents the participants' conceptions of the classroom practices and the education policy and whether they think there are some discrepancies between

classroom practices and education policy terms. This question also looks at the participants' perceptions of any changes that occurred or are expected after the regime change in Libya.

A theoretical contribution of the study is to try to find out if the claims that autonomy is inappropriate in some cultures can be confirmed or invalidated.

The questions of the present study were approached through participant observations, semi-structured interviews and informal interviews. The first set of questions was addressed through interviews with teachers and learners, whereas the second set was approached through observations, and the third question was investigated through informal interviews. However, the three methods helped in addressing the different questions in that data from one method enriched and validated data from the other ones, 'For it is possible to 'check out' what a teacher says against not only what others say, but against what the researcher himself observes' (Ribbins, Jarvis, Best, and Oddy, 1988, p. 161). I carried out observations before interviews as they provided me with more prompts to follow in the interviews. Observations themselves were mostly ensued by 'chats' with teachers and students to eliminate ambiguities about their activities and behaviour and to validate the notes and data I obtained from them.

The questions and prompts of the interviews and the themes of the observation are mainly derived from literature such as Kaplowitz (2012), Reeve and Jang (2006), Benson (2003), Kumaravadivelu (2003), Ryan and Deci (2000), and Reeve, Bolt and Cai (1999). However, autonomy can take various forms as well as degrees. There is no way for teaching autonomy or a certain recipe to follow for its implementation (Jiménez Raya et al., 2007; Benson, 2003; Dam, 1995), but it involves creating an appropriate learning environment (Dam, 1995). Environments in the classroom significantly affect students' behaviour, practice and effort. They can boost or thwart student autonomy (Reeve, 2006; Deci and Ryan, 1987). Autonomy-supportive environments are the ones which nurture and buttress students' psychological needs, personal interests, and integrated values, whereas controlling environments frustrate, undermine and thwart such values. Influences can be interpersonal relationships, classroom events, or social demands. Creating autonomy-supportive environments

means finding approaches to uphold students' freedom and choice (Reeve, 2006, p. 228). For creating an atmosphere that supports collaboration between learners and teachers as well as among learners and helps them to be more responsible, Kaplowitz (2012) suggests three guidelines: listening to learners before and during instructional interactions; engaging learners by allowing them to interact with the content in meaningful, relevant and useful ways; and inspiring them to become lifelong learners through helping them to become self-reliant, capable, and self-confident (pp. 17-18). However, such practices can vary greatly from one situation to another depending on the teaching-learning context and the teachers' creativity (Benson, 2003). Therefore, this study aimed to unravel the roles, the relationship and the behaviours of the participants and tried to find out what stands behind what they perceive, believe and practise and what affects it, rather than measure what happens in the context of this study against a certain definition or certain criteria (For the framework on which the study is based see 2.5.8)

3.3 Research paradigms

This section deals with the methodology of the study. It argues the interpretive mode of inquiry and provides a rationale for adopting this paradigm as a research framework for this study.

3.3.1 Introduction

This study adopts an interpretive paradigm of research employing a qualitative design which 'presupposes a certain view of the world that in turn defines how a researcher selects a sample, collects data, analyzes data, and approaches issues of validity, reliability, and ethics' (Merriam, 2009, p. 165). I start here by presenting key terms and definitions on which the current section is based. Paradigm as defined by Bryman (1988) is 'a cluster of beliefs and dictates which for scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done, how results should be interpreted, and so on' (p. 4). The elements accumulated in this definition are illustrated by Guba and Lincoln (1991) as follows: ontology asks the question 'What is there that can be known?' (p. 159). It deals with issues of existence

and nature of reality. Epistemology is concerned with how we know what we know and addresses the question 'What is the relationship of the knower to the known (or the knowable)?' (p. 159). Methodology is concerned with methods, systems, and rules for carrying out an investigation. The question asked here is 'How can we go about finding out things?' (p. 160). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state: 'These beliefs shape how the qualitative researcher sees the world and acts in it' (p. 13). In this study, these beliefs were reflected in the use of qualitative research through employing the ethnographic research techniques of observations, interviews and informal interviews in the form of conversations.

	Positivist	Interpretive
Ontology	-reality exists objectively and independently from human experiences.	-reality is subjectively constructed and reconstructed through human and social interaction process.
Epistemology	-deductive; emphasis on testing theories leading to verification or falsification of hypothesis, seeking generalisability, and establishing cause-effect relationship.	-inductive, reality obtained through understanding human and social interaction.
Methodology	-employs objective measurement employing quantitative methods to test hypothetic-deductive theory.	-researchers engage in social contexts to learn how informants interact from the informants' own perspectives. Thus, it understands the meanings embedded in human and social interaction.

Table (2) A comparison between the positivist and the interpretive paradigms to research (Adapted from WenShin and Hirschehheim, 2004).

I address here the inappropriateness of the positivist approach for this study. The positivist approach aims at establishing a hypothesis, collecting data and testing the hypothesis. As this study aims at exploring the situation as it is rather than test a hypothesis, the positivist approach does not serve the goals of and is unqualified for this study (see also, 3.3.2, 3.3.3.2 and 3.3.3.3 for a rationale of selecting the interpretive approach). The interpretive approach assumes that human behaviour is built by the meanings people attach to the world rather than by external factors and processes, and by 'multiple realities [that] are constructed socially by individuals' (Merriam, 1998, p. 4). For reasons of economy, I provide a brief comparison between interpretive and positivist paradigms in table 2.

Now, I show how my study fits into these paradigms. Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that answering the question of methodology or choosing the appropriate methodology depends on responses to the epistemological question which in turn depends on answers to the ontological questions.

Ontologically, the aim of this study is the exploration and investigation of participants' perceptions and practices in teaching and learning and how these relate to learner autonomy. This study does not pose a priori hypothesis or notion guiding the analysis. Thus, it does not seek to prove, falsify or test a hypothesis. Epistemologically, the study adopts an interpretive paradigm which denotes a subjective interpretation of the views, activities, actions and practices of participants of the study. Therefore, and in line with the interpretive paradigm, this study follows ethnographic methods which are observations, interviews and informal interviews in the form of conversations.

In the next part, I present an outline of the methodology used in the present study.

3.3.2 The Qualitative approach

Merriam (1998) argues that 'research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education' (p. 1), and suggests that:

The qualitative, interpretive, or naturalistic research paradigm defines the methods and techniques most suitable for collecting and analyzing data. Qualitative inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data (p. 1).

In the same vein, Holliday (2007a) argues that interpretive research enables researchers to investigate and make sense of the realities of the research setting and people. In this paradigm, researchers explore, delve into, illuminate and interpret what they see and hear which is representative of reality.

According to qualitative research, reality 'is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds' (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Thus, meanings that people attach to the world are difficult to measure precisely and interpretations of the world differ from one individual to another. Moreover, 'Quantitative measures simply cannot capture many of the complexities of language and cultural learning' (Jackson, 2006, p. 135), and in qualitative research 'interpretation comes via the understanding of group actions and interactions' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 8). Therefore, qualitative research, which is 'a situated activity that locates the observer in the world' (Denzin et al., p. 3) was employed in this study in order to maintain an understanding of how people interpret the world, and how these interpretations inform people's actions.

The next part presents an overview of case study as well as sheds light on ethnographic methods as an approach to research providing the research techniques to data collection.

3.3.2.1 Case study approach

Case studies are a common way for implementing qualitative inquiry; they derive their credibility from different sources they apply for continuous descriptions and interpretations, as well as from consideration they grant for the influence of social, political and other contexts (Stake, 2005). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) point out that a case study 'provides a unique example of real people in real situations,

enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles' (p. 253).

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) and Tesch (1990) point out that case study is concerned with in-depth, intensive and detailed study of a single individual, event or a number of related events over a certain period of time. Merriam (2009) defines case study by its features of being particularistic, descriptive and holistic. It is particularistic by focusing on a certain situation, event or programme where its importance lies in what it reveals and represents. A case study is descriptive through the thick description of its product. Thick description refers to 'the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated' (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). Case study research is also holistic in that it presents and clarifies to the reader the case studied. In addition, case study research has the ability to document the subjective data which is considered by several researchers as very important for describing and explaining human behaviour (Hammersley, 1989), provides systematic, in-depth analysis (Van Donge, 2006; Hitchcock et al., 1995), and data that are rich and 'strong in reality' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 256).

Merriam (2009) notes that a case is defined by its boundedness, i.e. the case defined and people observed or interviewed should be bounded spatially or temporally and that the data collected should be finite. Therefore, Yin (2003) notes that a case is studied in relation to its localisation of place, and notes that in the selection of a single case, it is important to carry out a careful investigation 'to minimize the chances of misrepresentation and to maximize the access needed to collect the case study evidence' (p. 42).

3.3.2.2 The selection of case

The criteria used for selecting a case must be explicit as well as justified as a part of the methodology of a study (Denscombe, 2010). He (2010) suggests a number of criteria for selecting a case. The most common of these is typicality which means that the case selected is similar in its most important aspects to other cases. Therefore, results can very probably be generalised to other cases. Stake (2000) draws attention to the importance of carefully selecting a case before formally

commencing a study. Marashall and Rossman (2011) provide a number of criteria for a good site:

> (a) entry is possible; (b) there is a high probability that a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest is present; (c) the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with the participants in the study; (d) the study can be conducted and reported ethically; and (e) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured (p. 101).

Stake (2000) notes that one important criterion for selecting a case is choosing the one 'from which we feel we can learn the most' (p. 446). The reason for opting the case for the current study was the 'most accessible' and 'the one ... [I] can spend the most time with' (Stake, 2000, p. 446), as well as the one which I envisaged to be the least influenced by my presence. During the collection of data I also was quite happy with the interaction with the case so I was able to grasp understanding of the case.

3.3.2.3 Sample of the study

In this part, I present the participants of the study and a background on them. Firstly, there were 33 students, all female students as the school where the study was carried out was only for girls. Although I did not ask them about their age because it is not completely acceptable in Libya, they would be 17 to 19 years old. These students were all specialised in English in their third year of secondary school. Secondly, there were 15 teachers; these were also females. The qualifications of these teachers were all Bachelor of Arts. The teaching experience of these teachers ranged between 3 years to 11 years. Further to these teachers, there were three other teachers whose experience was relatively long. These were one female and two male teachers. They did not teach in the school where the study was carried out but in another school. They were chosen because they had attended teacher training courses and for adding insights into how learner autonomy was perceived in the context of the study as well as whether there have been changes in the context over the past years both before and after the regime change.

The fourth group of participants were inspectors. These were 3 male inspectors. The main contribution of these participants was their views about how they evaluate teachers in inspection visits, whether they think teachers are allowed to follow their preferred modes of teaching or not, and their perceptions of education policy and any changes that might have taken place in teaching and learning in the context of this study. There were also 2 head-teachers, one male and one female. They were interviewed in order to see how they behave with students and teachers, whether they think teachers and students are allowed to work according to their preferred modes of teaching and learning or there are certain modes which they should follow, and their views about education policy and its role in determining how schools are managed and teaching and learning are planned. In addition, 3 male parents were interviewed. These were interviewed in order to see their perceptions of allowing learners responsibility for their learning, how this is perceived in the context of the study and whether they have noticed changes in education in the post-conflict period.

At the beginning, I was planning to collect data from a school which I myself had attended. However, after visiting it, I felt that some teachers seemed to welcome my presence because they are acquaintances of mine and therefore I envisaged that my presence could affect their behaviour and their activities. In addition, there were also a few teachers who were new to me and who seemed to me hesitant to take part in the study. As a consequence, I sought access to another school. In the case study school where I collected my data, the teachers were mostly new to me, I asked them to take part in the study and informed them that this would not affect their work in any way, their evaluation by any party and that it was completely voluntary to take part. These participants welcomed after asking some questions about the study and its nature. After that, and through the period of data collection, I had a friendly relationship with them and this was really a privilege for me (for gaining access to the site of the study, see 3.5.1). Also, the other participants who were outside the case study school were really cooperative and friendly and welcomed taking part in the interviews. Therefore, I can say that the informal and relaxing atmosphere that was created with the participants provided me with greater opportunities to benefit the most from these participants. (For more information on participants, see parts 3.5.3; 3.5.4).

3.3.3 Ethnography

This part is intended to present an overview of ethnography as an approach to research that provides the research techniques for data collection. However, this study is not a typical ethnography, it rather employed ethnographic methods to data collection and analysis.

Nowadays ethnography has become one of the main and mostly employed methods of research in educational settings. The major strength of this method is its focus on understanding the perceptions, cultures and values of the people and institutions being studied. The ethnographic researcher obtains understanding of the lives of participants through entering and immersing in their lives (Walford, 2001). Because ethnography is equipped to investigate issues that cannot be studied through experimental research (Watson-Gegeo, 1988), and ethnographic methods provide a picture of what happens in the context of the study, I followed an ethnographic approach for investigating perceptions and practices concerning learner autonomy in this study.

3.3.3.1 Definition of ethnography

For Hancock and Algozzine (2006), ethnographic studies are a process of investigating social and cultural groups to tease out and describe beliefs, values, and attitudes which make up the behaviour, language, and interactions of a group. In order to reach and obtain the findings, the researcher typically carries out an investigation through being immersed in the group. Murchison (2010) defines ethnography as 'a research strategy that allows researchers to explore and examine the cultures and societies that are a fundamental part of the human experience' (p. 4). Hence, Murchison (2010) argues that the only appropriate way for studying social and cultural phenomena is to study them in action.

Watson-Gegeo's (1988) definition of ethnography is widely cited. It states that ethnography is 'the study of people's behavior in naturally occurring, ongoing setting, with a focus on the cultural interpretation of behavior' (p. 576). She (1988) adds that the role of ethnographer is to obtain description, interpretation and

explanation of what people do in the setting of the study such as classroom, community, etc. Brewer (2000), however, provides a more accurate and detailed definition of ethnography:

> Ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but *without meaning being imposed on them externally* (added emphasis, p. 6).

In the next part, I present features of ethnographic research that qualified this method for this study.

3.3.3.2 Features of ethnographic research

Watson-Gegeo (1988) presents a number of principles of ethnographic research. She argues that the focus of ethnography is on people's behaviour in groups and on cultural patterns in that behaviour through observing and interviewing individuals amongst groups. She also describes ethnography as holistic, i.e. an ethnographer has to describe and explain any aspect of a culture or behaviour in relation to the whole system in which it is located.

The features of ethnography might be summarised as follows: ethnographic research involves producing descriptive cultural knowledge of a group (Hitchcock et al., 1995); describing activities in relation to a particular cultural context from the point of view of the members of the group themselves (Hitchcock et al., 1995) through studying the participants' actions and practices in natural everyday contexts, rather than putting conditions on them (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007); producing a list of features essential to membership of a group or culture; describing and analysing patterns of social interaction (Watson-Gegeo, 1988); providing, whenever possible, insider accounts (O'reilly, 2005; Hitchcock et al., 1995); using a variety of sources for collecting data, though participant observation and/ or relatively informal conversations are usually the main sources (Atkinson et al., 2007); investigating a

small number of cases sometimes a single setting or group of people in order to gain in-depth accounts (Atkinson et al., 2007); adopting a form of analysis which prefers or emphasises description and explanation of meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and instructional practices, i.e. the results are verbal descriptions, explanations and theories rather than quantification and statistical analysis (Atkinson et al., 2007).

Jeffrey and Troman (2004) discuss the element of time an ethnographer spends on site. They point out that time is decided by the researchers themselves. However, the frequency of researchers' visits to the site is also an important determining factor in defining the time length of a research time. Murchinson (2010) adds to these the length of the project and other research methods a researcher employs which also can determine the length of time. Verma and Mallick (1999) discuss the element of time in educational studies. They argue that time for collecting data in educational studies is much shorter than that in traditional ethnographic studies. Walker (1993) argues for the use of 'condensed fieldwork' for collecting data in educational research to replace long term immersion in the field (p. 176), Ogbu (1981) notes that ethnography can be carried out with classroom or school observations for hours, a few days, one or two weeks, and Merriam (2009) notes that data gathering should stop when the researcher feels data and findings are saturated, that is when he/she feels nothing is new. Verma et al. (1999) add that this point should be kept in mind when analysing data. In the current study, data collection extended for about one hundred days with almost daily visits to the site.

My justification for employing ethnographic techniques in the present study is presented in the next part.

3.3.3.3 Rationale for ethnographic methods

The current study stresses the importance of interpreting what is found which involves being non-prescriptive. For research into classrooms to be an effective means to understanding events in the classroom, it should be able to interpret what happens in and around the classroom (Verma et al., 1999; Holliday, 1994).

Woods (1986) argues that ethnography is very appropriate and equipped to bridge the gap between the teacher and the researcher, educational research and educational practice, and theory and practice because the interest in ethnography is to unravel the behaviour, practice, interaction, beliefs, values, and perspectives from within the group and from the perspectives of the participants themselves. Heigham and Sakui (2009) point out that ethnographic research provides 'detailed and profound understanding of a given culture' in that it grabs data in their natural settings as they occur (p. 95). Another important characteristic which qualified ethnography for the present study is that it 'focuses on people's behaviour in groups and on cultural patterns in that behaviour' and that 'ethnography is holistic; that is, any aspect of a culture or behaviour has to be described and explained in relation to the whole system of which it is a part' (Watson-Gegeo, 1988, p. 577).

The concern in this study is to investigate the perceptions, practices and activities of learners and teachers and their relation to each other within the classroom and the institution. This maintains 'holism' which is an important feature of ethnographic research. This goes in line with what Watson-Gegeo (1988) argues that activities, interactions, and other factors in a lesson, which are seen as 'micro' or taking place in a micro-context, are considered as happening or taking place as a part of a macro-context such as the lesson as a whole, which is also seen as a part in a greater macro-context such as the school, the institution, society, etc. This might be linked to Stake's (2010) micro- and macro-interpretations 'small and personally oriented and those large and societially oriented' (p. 39). He clarifies micro-interpretation as 'giving meaning in terms of what an individual person can experience', while macro-interpretation means 'making meaning in terms of what large groups of people … do' (2010, p. 39). Micro-interpretation is a reflection of micro-context which is a segment or part of, and thus might to a good extent be a representation of, a macro-context. Stake (2010) refers to them as 'shading into each other from small numbers of experiences to large' (p. 39). In the context of this study, the case which is a secondary school can be considered a macro-context in relation to the micro-context of the classroom, and a micro-context within the larger macro-context which is the society.

In order to gain an emic perspective (an insider's perspective as opposed to etic perspective which refers to an outsider's perspective) and to avoid a one-sided view of a particular context, different aspects of the context of this study were observed carefully. In this, reaching a description of actions and events and maintaining a thick description was the goal of the study (Richards, 2003). Geertz (1973) states that 'ethnography is thick description' (pp. 9-10) and this is what this study aimed to reach from the context. However, both emic and etic perspectives are important in ethnographic research for the researcher needs to develop knowledge and gain data from within the context studied; that is, emic perspective. Etic perspective, or stepping outside, allows the researcher to understand what he/she obtains from the inside as well as enable the researcher to explain and detail the findings to readers (Heigham et al., 2009).

This study intended to gain understanding of participants' perceptions and practices. Perceptions are taken to mean the participants' accounts of their knowledge of people and culture (Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991). The methods employed for this purpose are participant observations, semi-structured interviews and informal interviews as detailed below. In the next section, I delineate the methods used and how they were employed to achieve the goals of the study.

3.4 Methods of data collection and analysis

This section presents the methods employed for collection and analysis of the data in the study. It also presents trustworthiness and ethical issues being important parts of qualitative research. It then presents how I gained access to the context and carried out the research inside the school.

3.4.1 Methods of data collection

The methods used in this study are participant observations, semi-structured interviews and informal interviews in the form of conversations. Using these techniques is meant to gain a deep and full description of the context and to provide trustworthiness to the study. The first set of questions was approached through

interviews with the participants, the second set was answered through data from observations and the third set was mainly answered using data from interviews. However, the methods all served the different questions of the research in some way. The methods of data collection are as follows:

3.4.1.1 Observation

The current research aimed to observe participants' real world actions and behaviours which are central elements in real world research. For this, 'a natural and obvious technique is to watch what they do, to record this in some way and then to describe, analyse and interpret what we have observed' (Robson, 2011, p. 315). Observation is sometimes considered 'the fundamental base for all research methods' (Adler and Adler, 1994, p. 389), 'the mainstay of the ethnographic enterprise' (Werner and Schoepfle, 1987, p. 257), and 'the most direct way of obtaining data' (Gillham, 2000, p. 46). Adler and Adler (1994) referring to Humphrey (1975) recommend the use of observation because 'there are entire settings and types of behaviour… that could not be studied through other, more blatant, methods' (p. 382), while McNeill and Chapman (2005) point out that among other techniques used to get close to participants, observation has been found to be the most effective ethnographic technique.

Toma (2000) argues that the research approach should distance involvement of the researcher with the participants, otherwise the research might be regarded biased and thus producing data influenced by the researcher. However, according to Mason (2002) the researcher should take a role on the continuum between complete participant and complete observer. She adds that it is not easy to take a 'once and for all' attitude to whether to take a part or not but rather it is taking different roles (p. 92). Also, ethnographic approaches require working with the participants for obtaining in-depth data and for producing thick description. Moreover, distancing from participation 'defeats the epistemological purpose of immersing ... in the setting' and the researcher is 'supposed to know what it feels like rather than simply act as a detached witness' (Mason, 2002, p. 92). Therefore, in my research, I tried to be as participant as I could, that is participating in the form of interacting as much as

possible with teachers and students while observing, mainly in order to achieve thick description of the context and because it runs counter to the aims of this research as well as principles of ethnographic research to keep distanced from participants. However this was not always possible. I was obliged sometimes to keep distance from participants in order not to form an intrusion source or appear to be curious which could ruin the relationship with the participants that I developed upon my appearance to them.

I arranged for observations at the participants' convenience. In the first visit, I introduced myself to the teachers and explained my research nature, aim and my methodology and the contribution it might provide. I also introduced myself to the students before the observation in order to make myself familiar which would help make participants behave freely, not be offended or restrained by my presence, make them feel comfortable and satiate their curiosity. I recollect my own experience when I was a student that a new figure in the classroom was looked at in doubt and cautiously, and thought of as either a teaching supervisor or assessor who, unless we students did well, would blame the teacher who in turn would rebuke us and assign extra work for us. A new figure in the classroom was often undesirable. Therefore, I made every effort to be welcomed and make my presence friendly and convenient.

Observations in this study aimed at gaining description of the setting observed such as arrangement of desks, aids used in teaching, the use of English by teachers and students, the teachers' and students' roles in the classroom, students' working with peers, students' asking for correction or clarification, teachers' empathy and readiness for their students interruptions and questions. These were then analysed from the perspective of autonomy to gain a perspective of how teachers and students see their roles and why they behave the way they do. I asked permission to tape-record the classes; however, only a few participants granted permission, which I considered completely normal, so I did not insist on this in order to provide a comfortable environment and maintain the welcoming atmosphere I was offered. During observations, I used pen and schedule to take notes (See appendix D). Observations were not excluded to classrooms, but commenced from the time of entering the institution.

Because Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver and Thwaite (2001) point out: 'We cannot infer the intentions of teacher action or the reasons why teachers work in the ways they do in particular lessons with particular students only from observed practices' (p. 498), and because perceptions cannot be discerned directly, Byram et al. (1991) point out that they can be manifested through the use of interviews. Therefore, semi-structured interviews and informal interviews were used as further methods for collecting data.

3.4.1.2 Interview

Fetterman (2010) considers the interview as the most important technique for collecting data for ethnographers. It allows the researcher to gain unique information from interviewees, as well as obtain information and interpretations that cannot be reached through other methods such as observations (Stake, 2010). Arksey and Knight (1999) state that interviews allow researchers to explore the context of thought, feeling, etc. which help to explore the relationship between aspects of situations as well as help interviewees to clarify and articulate their feelings, perceptions and understandings.

Robson (2011) presents three types of interviews based on degree of structure: fully structured interviews, where there is a set of predetermined questions with fixed wording; semi-structured interviews in which the interviewer follows a guide of a check list of the topics to be covered and a default set of words and their order but these are flexible and prone to modification according to the needs of the researcher and the flow of the interview; and unstructured interviews in which the researcher has an area of interest and focus but he/ she allows for the conversation, which can be informal, to develop.

The type employed in this study was semi-structured interviews because on the one hand it allows for a flexible and relaxing atmosphere for participants in that they would not feel interrogated and on the other hand they were not expected to initiate or perform the talk till they were prompted and shown the main points of the topic. Moreover, it bears flexibility in the wording and order of questions, as well as unplanned questions to be asked (Robson, 2011). The interviews in this study were intended to obtain students' and teachers' perceptions of their roles, whether the

students are satisfied with the methods their teachers use, whether they have a say in deciding what and how to study, why teachers teach the way they teach, whether they are affected by past experience, as well as what affects the participants in their teaching and learning and how these relate to their taking responsibility for their teaching and learning. I asked for permission from the interviewees to tape-record the interviews, but only a few of them agreed. I did not express dissatisfaction with this in order not to make them feel forced to take the interviews or be under any pressure. Therefore, I used note taking procedures during the course of the interviews and I informed the interviewees that the interviews would take longer as I needed to note down their responses and comments. The choice was left for the interviewees to speak in Arabic or English, and they were given the choice to be interviewed individually or together with colleagues as this might help remove anxiety and add confidence and relaxation to them.

An important issue worth considering here is that the presence of the researcher can influence the behaviour of those being interviewed. This is what Denscombe (2010) terms 'the observer effect' (p. 63), and 'interviewer effect' where the data can be 'affected by the personal identity of the researcher' (p. 178). To overcome such effects, Denscombe (2010) suggests that the researcher familiarises him/herself with the participants of the research, for example by wearing conventional clothes, courtesy, being neutral towards participants, spending time on the site of the study and having interaction with participants of the study. These strategies were followed to the possible extent in the setting of this study to lessen the researchers' effect and build a friendly, informal atmosphere.

3.4.1.3 Informal interviews: 'conversations'

Conversations in ethnographic research are considered an important method of data collection and can be used as a major method (Hitchcock et al., 1995), and for Fetterman (2010), they are 'the most common in ethnographic work' (p. 41). Woods (1986) argues that the term 'interview' is inappropriate as it poses formality and he prefers to 'regard them [interviews] as conversations or discussions, which indicate more of an open, democratic, two-way, informal, free-flowing process, and wherein

people can be 'themselves' and not feel bound by roles' (p. 67). Also, 'Informal interviews offer the most natural situations or formats for data collection and analysis' because they take the form of a conversation where the questions emerge serendipitously, and the result is answering the researcher's unasked questions (Fetterman, 2010, p.41).

This technique was not employed with all participants of the study. The participants that this technique was used with were not similar and provided different perspectives according to their status. These participants were inspectors, head-teachers, teachers not teaching in the institute being studied, and parents. These are not homogenous and therefore it was not possible for me to use the same questions for all of them. Therefore, I followed informal interviews in the form of conversations to make the participants feel relaxed and the themes of the interview emerge from previously prepared themes and the participants' responses. This technique was meant to elicit participants' views, opinions and perceptions about teaching and learning in general, their attitude to allowing learners autonomy in learning, their opinions about the pre-conflict and post-conflict policy of education, whether they think there has been any change at least so far, their interpretations of their roles as parties in learning and teaching towards students and the appropriate modes of learning in their views.

3.4.2 Methods of analysis

In this part, I come to what I did with the data obtained from observations and interviews. Analysis, according to Merriam (1998, p. 178) 'involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read', and these meanings abstracted from data constitute the findings of a study. This is achieved through describing, breaking data into bits, classifying and reconnecting them in order to obtain 'a fresh view of ... data' (Dey, 1993, p. 30). With the wide varieties of qualitative methods to research, there is no one agreed upon method to analysis of qualitative data. Therefore, as Coffey and Atkinson (1996) note 'analysis is not about adhering to any one correct approach or set of right techniques; it is imaginative, artful, flexible, and reflexive. It should be methodical,

scholarly, and intellectually rigorous' (p. 10), because there are different interpretations of data (Merriam, 2009). In this, the choice of a certain procedure depends entirely on the data, the purpose of the research and the preference of the researcher (Dey, 1993). Dörnyei (2007), Brewer (2000) and Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that data collection and analysis are non-linear, i.e. they do not have a specific order to follow and that they inform one another. As described by Merriam (1998), it is 'interactive', 'recursive and dynamic' (p. 155). That is, data analysis neither starts nor finishes when all data are collected, rather a 'rich and meaningful analysis of the data will not be possible if analysis is begun after all data are collected' (Merriam, 1998, p. 177). Therefore, in this study, analysis normally commenced with the collection of data in situ rather than when data gathering had stopped. This indeed helped to fill gaps in data as new categories emerged (Miles et al, 1994), to check validity of data as well as to focus on emerging themes which were of importance to the research.

Although there was a relatively large amount of data, I did the analysis manually mainly because computers cannot do the work of humans or be analytical like researchers (Hitchcock et al., 1995). Fetterman (2010, p. 89), though an advocate of the use of computers, points out that computers 'still require the eyes and ears of the ethnographer to determine what to collect and how to record it, as well as how to interpret the data from a cultural perspective', and Brewer (2000) asserts that the computer software has the advantages of coding and retrieving, but is unable to provide us with analyses.

Miles et al. (1994) present three steps for data analysis: data reduction where certain relevant units of the data are selected, focused, and simplified and this is where the researcher decides which chunks of data to code; data display is the process in which information from the data is assembled in a certain format; this leads to the next phase; drawing a conclusion, where findings are presented, interpreted and verified. They (1994) note that these three steps are not linear but are interactive, iterative and cyclical. With regard to data reduction in my study, I used partial transcription, as suggested by Dörnyei (2007) because not all data were of interest or relevant and the transcription of the full data was tedious and time-consuming. However, I very often

found myself transcribing most of the data. That is, after firstly listening to or reading the data in full, extracts relevant to the focus of the study were picked out, transcribed verbatim and typed in a Word file to facilitate search and processing later on. The data were read through more than once to grasp fuller understanding and to catch 'repeatable regularities' from the data (Kaplan, 1964 cited in Miles et al., 1994). As put by Marshall and Rossman (2011): 'Reading, rereading, and rereading through the data once more force the researcher to become intimate with the material' (p. 210).

The interview transcripts and observation notes were read and re-read and relevant and interesting words, phrases, statements or paragraphs were highlighted for easy reference during coding. This is mainly to define data categories that would be used as areas of analysis under which subcategories were compiled. The categories of analysis were derived from literature as well as emerged from participants' views and practices because depending solely on literature might not provide a framework that meets the categories in the data, and depending on categories from data alone might not offer categories that are closely related to the focus of the study. All in all, the themes in the observations and prompts in the interviews were themselves derived from literature on the field such as Kaplowitz (2012), Reeve and Jang (2006), Benson (2003), Oxford (2003), Kumaravadivelu (2003), Dörnyei (2001), Ryan and Deci (2000), Reeve, Bolt and Cai (1999), and Deci and Ryan (1987). Therefore, coding here, which is 'naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data' (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43), followed two steps. The first is initial or preliminary coding where words, lines or segments of the data were assigned names or codes. The second was the focused, selective or primary coding which used the most significant or frequent codes from the first coding to sort, link, organise and synthesise large amounts of data (Charmaz, 2006).

The second step is 'data display' (Miles et al. 1994, p.11). The analysis of the data was obtained through collecting themes from the transcribed data and compiling them under the relevant categories. These were interpreted and linked to categories derived from the literature and related to the research questions. Analysis was based

on emergent regularities, variations and links between particular items of data. Interpretations of data chunks were then related to other chunks. Finally, emergent themes that were connected and compared served to draw conclusions. Theoretical propositions could then be extended, modified or generated. These interpretations formed the findings of the research and were supported by verbatim quotations.

In the steps of analysis, Richards (2003) presents a number of hints that can be used throughout the analysis in order to produce a good account. He points these out as:

> '• Make it real – set the scene.
>
> • Don't present data – share it with the audience.
>
> • Allow plenty of time to paint a picture – but keep data in reserve.
>
> • Base claims on the data shown – the audience can respond to this' (p. 276).

Throughout analysis, I attempted to portray data as were presented in the site. Rather than provide my analysis alone I sustained analysis with chunks from data, from what really happened and was said. This does not always present things as clearly and simply as required; therefore, it was essential to interpret my understanding of the happenings and the statements of the participants. Throughout, I tried to focus analysis on the issues most relevant to the focus of the study. These were sometimes presented crudely such as 'group work' as it is known in literature about autonomy; other times, it was through relevant themes that emerged from data such as participants' preferences. Generally, the selection of categories was related to literature about autonomy as well as recurrence of categories.

3.4.3 Trustworthiness

Rallis and Rossman (2009) note that trustworthiness should be 'the first overarching consideration in designing and conducting a study, as well as critiquing the results of any study' (p. 264). Cowie (2009) argues that research should present a detailed and rich description of a situation in order to enable readers to 'imagine that they are

there', because 'readers need to be able to connect a researcher's version of reality with their own', which can boost the truthfulness of a research (p. 171).

Research should consider issues of validity and reliability during the research process in order to be trustworthy (Ruona, 2005). Internal validity or credibility refers to 'how research findings match reality' (Ruona, 2005, p. 247), i.e. to what extent the findings of research represent reality. For reliability, Cohen et al. (2007) put it as 'a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched' (p. 149). Validity and reliability in the quantitative sense are not qualified to be used to judge qualitative research (e.g. Ely, 1991), because qualitative research has different assumptions about reality and worldview and there can be different interpretations of the same data (Merriam, 2009), and qualitative researchers demonstrate that there can be more than one way of interpreting events (e.g. Rallis et al., 2009; Janesick, 2003). Therefore, they are often replaced by terms that are appropriate to and can enhance trustworthiness in qualitative research. Credibility is used as a parallel to internal validity (Rallis et al., 2009; Guba and Lincoln, 1994); transferability (Guba et al., 1994), or usefulness (Rallis et al., 2009) for external validity; dependability (Guba et al., 1994), or rigour (Rallis et al., 2009) for reliability; and confirmability for objectivity (Guba et al., 1994). These issues constitute an essential part of any research. Their threat cannot be eradicated completely but might be diminished through attributing due concern to them throughout a research (Cohen et al., 2007). An important strategy to ensure these issues in qualitative research is through carefully grounding interpretations in the data and making sound and clear how the data were analysed. It can be achieved through 'showing the workings' of a research (Holiday 2007a , p. 8), that is by making the researcher's stance clear to participants and to readers throughout the research (Rallis et al., 2009).

There are procedures that can be employed to enhance trustworthiness of qualitative research. Those that were employed for this purpose in this study are as follow:

3.4.3.1 Credibility/ Internal validity

Merriam (2009) points out that in qualitative research human beings, who are the primary instrument in collecting and analysing data, observe and record reality directly without mediums. Therefore, qualitative researchers are closer to reality and internal validity is thus strong. However, validity is 'relative' and 'is never something that can be proven or taken for granted' (Maxwell (2005, p. 105), because 'What is being investigated are people's constructions of reality—how they understand the world' (Merriam, 2009, p. 214).

The procedures employed for checking validity in the current study include:

-Collecting long-term evidence from the context under study and the relevance and appropriateness of data collected (Merriam, 2009; Rallis et al., 2009; Richards, 2003), or intensively over a relatively short period of time (Rallis et al., 2009). I stayed on site to the extent that I started to see things being repeated and felt that it is unlikely that new things would emerge. Actually this is one of the issues that determine the length of stay on site; that is, when the researcher feels that nothing is new (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the length of my stay in site extended for about 100 days with extensive visits.

-Triangulating, i.e., collecting data using different methods or from different sources (Merriam, 2009; Rallis et al., 2009). I employed observations and interviews so as to grasp the participants' behaviours and their ways of practising their activities and to listen to their opinions and views.

-Respondent validation or member checking where the findings of a research are given back to participants to verify the results, i.e. to check whether what is recorded is identical to what they mean (Murchison, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Rallis et al., 2009; Cohen et al., 2007; Punch, 2005; Silverman, 2005; Hitchcock et al., 1995; Miles et al., 1994). I validated the respondents' views in interviews through intensifying the interviews where some questions were repeated and some were rephrased as well as ensuring that the participants' responses are clear. For my understanding and interpretation of incidents in observations, I usually followed observations by talks with teachers and students. These helped validate my data and interpretations.

-Comparing the results of a study with data obtained from another study (Hitchcock et al., 1995). In the context of this study, there were some studies dealing with related issues such as the role of teachers and the applicability of Communicative Language Teaching. These were used for this purpose. Therefore, I related the findings of my study to conclusions of such studies to validate my findings, though preserving the fact that each study has its peculiar characteristics.

-Adopting a stance of respecting the different realities rather than claiming finding out the 'Truth', which could imply that finding of a study is peculiar to that time and setting (Rallis et al., 2009). In this study, from the beginning, I aimed at exploring the status quo rather than following a hypothesis or being biased towards or fuelled by a previous hypothesis.

-Accurately telling what really occurred and reporting honestly how things happened (Brewer, 2000). I tried to be as explicit as possible throughout my research. In my interpretation and presentation of data, I aimed to report on what I had seen and heard on site. I supported this with verbatim quotations from incidents on site as well as with quotations from participants' own views. During data collection, this necessitated switching between stances of insider trying to grasp an emic perspective and stepping outside to gain an etic view of the scene.

-Holiday (2007a) asserts that 'showing the workings' (p. 8), i.e. describing the steps of a research is the key to validity in qualitative research. Hence, in a research it would not be sufficient for maintaining validity to merely state the findings, but the research has to describe clearly what procedures were followed to reach the findings (Holliday, 2007a; Hitchcock et al., 1995). I explained the motive on which the study was based, the procedures followed for approaching the site of the study, the techniques for collecting data and the methods used for analysing my data as well as my position in the research (see 1.2.6).

3.4.3.2 Usefulness/ Transferability/ External validity

The tendency in qualitative research is not to generalise or export findings to other cases, i.e. it aims to 'understand the particular in depth, not ... find out what is

generally true of the many' (Merriam, 2009, p. 224), because of the non-uniformity of different contexts and the 'particularity' of interpretations that ethnographic research involves (Ramanathan and Atkinson, 1999, pp. 55-56). Since the aspiration of qualitative research is finding out one aspect of reality, which is 'holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; ... not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon' (Merriam, 2009, p. 213), the critique of non-generalisability pointed to qualitative research might be invalidated on this ground and compensated for by thorough description and detailing of the research context, methods of data collection and analysis to provide an opportunity for 'extensional value' (Ramanathan et al., 1999, p. 55) of ethnographic research results. Therefore, conclusions from one study can be a basis for understanding another context. Usefulness or transferability in qualitative research can be enhanced through a number of procedures:

-Providing rich and elaborate description and interpretation of the case studied, so as to qualify it for generalisation to other contexts. That is, the interpretation should be demonstrated well and detailed enough to allow the chance of practical applicability of results (Merriam, 2009; Richards, 2003). I delineated the context of the study, the site studied and the participants. Understanding these is meant to facilitate understanding the phenomenon under study in similar contexts.

-Detailing the research process throughout, the design, data collection and analysis methods, the context of the study, the conclusions and findings supported by extracts from data (Merriam, 2009; Rallis et al., 2009; Richards, 2003; Brewer, 2000; Nunan, 1992). These methods might be used as a reference for other studies. I also provided an explanation of my position, the way I approached the context and the methods used for collecting and analysing data.

-Here, too, describing the steps of the research or 'showing the workings' (Holiday, 2007a, p. 8) is the key to validity in qualitative research and can enhance chances of transferring the findings in one research setting to another context. So, presenting the findings of a research is insufficient for external validity or transferring results of one research. Rather, it is important to detail measures used throughout the research (Holliday, 2007a, Hitchcock et al., 1995). The findings of this research were presented with reference to the peculiar context of the study not aiming to generalise

to other contexts. However the findings obtained along with a thorough delineation of the context, the participants, the methods of the data collection and analysis might be employed to transfer the findings of this study to similar contexts. Therefore, the presentation of these is not meant only to provide a clear route to the findings but to understand the procedures of the study which is prerequisite to show the peculiarities of this study that should be taken into consideration if findings are to be transferred to other contexts.

3.4.3.3 Rigour/ Dependability/ Reliability

Merriam (2009, p. 222) notes that 'if the findings of a study are consistent with the data presented, the study can be considered dependable.' Reliability can be enhanced by 'triangulating data, and by leaving an audit trail, that is, by describing in detail how the study was conducted and how the findings were derived from the data' (Merriam, 2009, p. 234)

Nunan (1992) presents five issues for enhancing reliability in ethnographic research that were exploited for maintaining reliability in this study:

-Researchers must describe their relation to the researched because this relationship and the role the researcher occupies among the participants can have effects on the data obtained. My stance and position in the process of collecting data and approaching the site were presented in order to illustrate my relationship with the participants and to show if any influence was exercised on participants by my presence. Because I did not have connections with the participants before the study, in the first step of my entering the site, I introduced myself, the procedures and aims of my research as well as what was expected from the participants. I developed an informal relationship with the participants and accommodated my presence for the purpose that the participants would not be offended or restrained by my presence to practise their everyday chores and not to alter or idealise any of their beliefs, ways or behaviours in that.

-Another issue that is intended to enhance dependability is describing the participants of the study by the researcher. Description of participants precludes bias and

establishes reliability as a consequence. Neither participants who are attracted to researchers nor those who distance themselves from researchers are typical participants. The participants of a study must be described carefully and clearly, however. This was presented in the form of outlining the age of the participants, the level of their study, the qualifications of teachers and the careers of other participants (see part 3.3.2.3).

-Another important factor is the description of the social context where a study is conducted. Participants can be affected by the social setting and circumstances when data are generated. What participants reveal in one context and under certain circumstances may differ from what they reveal in a different context or circumstances, e.g. whether the participant is alone or with a group. This included describing two levels of the context. The first was the more general, wider context represented by a profile of the country and the education system in general. The other level presented the smaller context which is the school studied itself.

-The thorough and adequate description and delineation of research methods and processes by which data were collected is important in ethnographic research so that these methods might be used as a reference for other studies. McKay (2006) presents this issue as follows: 'qualitative researchers need to provide comprehensive details about their procedures and catalogue their data in such a way that others could retrieve and review the evidence they provide in their research reports' (p. 14). The methods of data collection and analysis were presented throughout starting from choosing the paradigm and methods of data collection to the stage of working on data and its interpretation to present the findings of the study.

It goes without saying that a researcher should show respect and sensitivity to participants and the study should be 'conducted ethically, with deep sensitivity to the needs and interests of the participants' (Rallis et al., 2009, p. 269). Therefore, in the next part I discuss the ethical procedures considered in this study.

3.4.4 Ethical issues

In the process of research, it is as important to focus on rightness and wrongness of actions towards people being studied as on the quality of the research itself (Miles et al., 1994). Weis (1992) assigns three conditions which unless met, the data will be useless, damage will be caused to participants and as a consequence the researcher should not be there. These key points are: '(i) know who you are before going into the field; (ii) respect those with whom you are working; and (iii) conduct yourself with the utmost of integrity at all times' (p. 44). Therefore, Mason (2002) suggests that a researcher should confront problems concerning ethical issues through: describing the purposes of the research; defining the parties—individuals, groups, practices, etc.— that are involved in, affected by, or interested in the research; and examining what implications these parties have on formulating the research questions. In this, Atkinson et al. (2007) hold the ethnographer responsible to behave ethically, to pay enough attention to the goals of the research, the context where the research is being carried out, and to respect the values and interests of the participants in the research during its implementation.

The University of Sheffield presents a number of points that should be taken into consideration in order for a research project to be ethical. As participants' right, these include gaining participants' informed approval to conduct the research and granting them the right to withdraw from a research; guaranteeing confidentiality of all information or data from participants; keeping secure all personal data or samples; and keeping all participants safe. On the part of the researcher, the researcher should be honest towards participants and research, keep integrity of the research, try to make the research safe both for the participants and for him/herself, and be culturally sensitive towards participants (The University of Sheffield Research, n. d.).

The previous points were taken into consideration in the current study. Informed consent was obtained from participants. The privacy of everything that happened during observations and interviews was preserved for use in the research only and was dealt with in secrecy. Precautions were taken to ensure that no harm was incurred to participants. Access to contexts and cooperation from participants was

sought in a friendly way (See Appendices, A, B, C; also see 3.5.1 for more about ethical procedures during gaining access to the site).

The process of gaining access to the site and fieldwork are presented in detail in the following section.

3.5 On site 'Fieldwork'

This section presents the procedures of collecting data starting with obtaining permission to access the site to the process of leaving the site. During the process of collecting data, I aimed to 'focus on *naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings*, so that ... [I] have a strong handle on what ''real life'' is like' (Miles et al., p.10, original emphasis).

The first step towards fieldwork was obtaining the participants' approval to partake in the study; without whose consent the fieldwork would not have been possible in the site.

3.5.1 Gaining access to site: commencement of research

In the process of gaining permission to access the site, I had to meet the head-teacher of the school where the study was conducted. I explained the nature of my research and what I expect from teachers, students, and all the staff in the school and what I was going to do in the school. The head-teacher agreed that I carry out the study in the school provided that teachers and students themselves agree, and asked for a letter from the Education Secretariat office to grant me access to the site. Before seeking the letter I asked the head-teacher to check with teachers and other participants whether they were willing to participate in the research. The head-teacher asked me to talk to the teachers to ask them by myself, so I talked to teachers and explained to them the nature and purpose of the research, and that I would appreciate it if they would allow me to carry out the study at their institute and they take part in it. The teachers granted their consent verbally. I intended to talk to the head-teacher and the teachers before seeking permission from the Education Secretariat because I did not want to make participants feel forced to take part. The

letter from the Education Secretariat (Appendix C) took about two days to obtain. After I obtained it I presented it to the head-teacher and distributed the ethics information sheets and the consent forms (Appendices A, B) to participants to read, sign and return them to me. When I gave these documents to them, I again explained the nature and purpose of the research and what they and I would do, asked them to read the information before they sign and showed them that it is completely voluntary to participate, they can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason, and refusing to participate will incur no consequences whatsoever. All the participants agreed to take part and they returned the consent forms a few days later completed and signed. This way I was allowed permission to enter the school.

Before my first entry to classrooms, I informed one of the teachers that I had to talk to the students about the research, about what I was going to do, and ask their permission to partake. I asked her whether she preferred me to talk to the students or to do it by herself, she opted for me to do so, so I asked her for some time at the beginning of the class to familiarise students with myself and my work. I told the students my name, my specialisation, my research, what I was there for and whether they would approve my presence and participate in the research, whether they would allow audio recording of the classes, and asked them to inform any of the teachers, email me or the supervisor if there were any complaints or if they found that my presence would affect their learning in any way or cause any inconvenience. Thankfully, all students were willing and agreed to take part in the research so I informed them that they would have to read the ethics information sheet and sign consent forms. I asked the teacher to distribute the ethics information sheets and consent forms to them and I asked them to read and sign the consent forms if they would take part. These forms were later collected from students by one of the teachers and handed to me.

3.5.2 Observations

In my eyes, the observation did not start inside the classroom but from the time I sat with the head-teacher and obtained the approval to do the research in the institute. For example, when I sat with the head-teacher and asked her if I might be allowed

access to the site to carry out my research, she gave her own consent but conditioned access to the site on the other participants' consent and asked me to negotiate it with them. To me, this signalled that the head-teacher does not exercise pressure on teachers or students. Also, the head-teacher asked me to present a letter from the Education Secretariat office in order to be granted access to the site, which I interpreted as being a sign of centralisation by the Education office.

Observations were not excluded to classrooms but to all happenings that occurred in the institute relating to staff relationship to teachers and students, teachers to each other, teachers to students, and students' relationship to each other, to teachers and others. I chose to carry out observations before interviews as these familiarised me with the participants as well as provided me with more insights to the interview questions. I had already prepared a schedule of observation themes to take notes (See Appendix D) and the voice recorder. Observations focused on descriptive notes and reflective notes. Descriptive notes included the time, date, place and length of the observation session, number of participants and description of the setting. Reflective notes meant grasping and reflecting on participants' movements, interactions, tone of voice, as well as happenings that seemed to reflect on participants' behaviour, attitudes, moods, or views towards each other (after Lodico, Spaulding, Voegtle, 2006). It is difficult to be a complete participant without missing interesting notes and incidents and perhaps without being obtrusive sometimes; therefore, I tried to take a place in the classroom where I could minimise students' curiosity towards a stranger in the classroom as well as where I could see and hear what happens in the classroom interrupted by times when I had to interfere seeking clarification of views or actions by the teacher or students. Undoubtedly, it is impossible to grasp every small happening in the classroom but I tried to compensate for this by spending longer time on site. The procedure was to take notes and make interventions for clarifying things when I saw that intervention did not disrupt or annoy the teacher or students. Observations were sometimes also followed by chats after class to ask about things that I could not understand. These chats also served as checks for my interpretations of things that happened in the classroom. The observations extended over a period of about 100 days.

3.5.3 Interviews

In my research, I used interviews mainly to elicit participants' perceptions, views, beliefs and opinions as these are very difficult if not impossible to find out through other techniques. The interview questions sought to find out participants' perceptions, views and opinions of their roles, practices and the environment of learning and teaching (see 3.2). Interview questions had been prepared before I started interviewing the participants (Appendix E). The interviews were carried out after observations to enrich interview questions and to allow more relaxing time to check on any issues that have not been clear enough for me in observations. This also provided concrete events which encouraged deeper reflection. The number of students interviewed was thirty-three students. I offered them to choose the modes of interviews. They wanted to make group interviews but I explained that group interviews would not allow all the participants to state their opinions or comment sufficiently on different points as well as would consume a long time so we agreed that the interviews would be in pairs of students together, and there were three students who were interviewed together. Not all students agreed to be audio recorded; only eight of them agreed to be recorded while the rest refused. Fifteen teachers were interviewed, they were interviewed individually and only five permitted recording. In cases where recording was not permitted, I took notes and asked the participants to allow more time so I could take more detailed notes and explanations of their responses. Both teacher and student interviewees were given the option to speak in Arabic or English in the interviews so it would be more convenient for them to express their opinions in the way they preferred; however, they all chose to speak in English; perhaps they considered this as an opportunity to practise the language.

The following tables show the numbers of teachers and students and the modes of interviews. The interviews ranged between thirty minutes to seventy minutes each. It should be noted here that the time and place of all observations, interviews and conversations were left to the participants to choose. Participants were interviewed three times each. This helped cover different questions fully and allowed shorter interviews, which would probably have been more convenient for the participants.

Interview	No. of teachers interviewed	Mode of interviews
1,2,3	15	Individual

Table (3): Numbers and modes of interviews with teachers.

Interview	No. of students interviewed	Mode of interviews
1,2,3	33	Pairs

Table (4): Numbers and modes of interviews with students.

3.5.4 Informal interviews 'conversations'

Ethnographic research allows for different techniques to be used favouring those that dig deep into participants' worlds and help gain real insights from people's lives. In this research, I employed a number of interviews in the form of friendly conversations in order to make the atmosphere more relaxing, also because these participants were not similar and thus might hold different views from each other, I decided there was not a certain set of questions for all. These participants were inspectors, teachers who attended teacher training courses and had relatively long teaching experience, head-teachers and parents. They were chosen mainly in order to provide insights into how learner autonomy is perceived in the context of the study and to provide a view of whether there have been any changes in teaching and learning and in education policy in the post-conflict period. That is, the focus here was primarily on the third research question. I talked to them about the nature of my study and that they can refuse to take part. When they agreed, I talked to them about

the ethics information sheet and asked them to read and sign the consent forms. In these, I informed the interviewees that data would be used for academic purposes— for my study, I talked to them about the topic of my research and asked for their views, opinions and comments about it and about the situation in the context of the study. There were a number of points I wanted to elicit the interviewees' perspectives about. I used a pen and paper to take notes I found major and relevant to the focus of the study. The interviews with the head-teachers took place in their offices, teachers' interviews in the teachers' office at school, interviews with inspectors in offices, and interviews with parents at their own houses. These interviews were meant to access different people's views about the issue of allowing learners control and autonomy in their learning. I asked the inspectors mainly about their interests when visiting teachers during class times, what their role in this is, on what basis they evaluate teachers, what they are advised or supposed to do, their visions about the teachers and students in relation to learners being autonomous and taking responsibility, that is whether they encourage this or see it as not feasible and inappropriate, their preferences and expectations in this regard, and their views about education policy and whether there have been any changes after the revolution (See appendix H). In regard to teachers number 16, 17 and 18, I interviewed them in order to see their views about the teacher training course they had attended and whether there have been changes over the past years or not as they have been teaching English for a number of years. So I primarily wanted to know whether they are familiar with techniques for allowing learners responsibility for their learning or not, how they perceive allowing learners to be active and autonomous in their learning and how learners being responsible for learning is generally perceived in Libya. I also wanted to see their views of whether any changes have taken place over the years, and about the teacher training course they have taken, its content, length and whether they have changed their ways of teaching and benefited from it. So the questions these teachers were asked were basically similar to questions asked to the other teachers. (See appendix F). From head-teachers, I wanted to elicit their opinions about learners taking responsibility for their learning, whether they allow teachers to follow their plans in teaching or not, whether they provide teaching aids for teachers and students, and whether they see any constraints or influences on

teachers and students or the school in general by the Secretariat of Education, the inspectors or any other party (See appendix G). In regard to parents, I mainly wanted to know their views about permitting learners to be responsible for their learning and independent of teachers, and whether they allow their children to follow what they like and prefer in learning or impose their opinions on children, as well as whether they have noticed changes to education in the post-conflict period (See appendix I).

Informal interview/ participant	3 Inspectors	3 teachers	3 parents	2 head-teachers	Mode of interview
Number of interviews	1 interview each	1 interview each	1 interview each	1 interview each	individual

Table (5): Numbers and modes of interviews with inspectors, teachers not at the institute under study, head-teachers and parents.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter delineated the methodology followed in the study, presented an account of case study, ethnographic research, methods of collecting and analysis of data, and the issues related such as trustworthiness and ethical issues, as well as procedures followed during data collection. Methodologically, this study rested on ethnographic research traditions. There are four aspects of ethnography present in this study. First, it studies settings and practices in real life; my study focused on people's real lives in a particular place at a particular time. Second, ethnography is holistic, this study sought to look at a phenomenon inside an institution of a secondary school investigating the phenomenon from the perspectives of the people involved; the phenomenon my study is considering is learner autonomy. Third, ethnography rests in its work on a number of methods; my study used the methods of participant observations, semi-structured interviews and informal interviews. Fourth, ethnography is interpretive aiming to characterise participants' perspectives; my

study sought to represent participants' behaviours and practices (adapted from Barton and Hamilton, 1998).

Chapter 4 **Data Analysis**

4.1 Introduction

Analysis of data in this thesis is divided into three sections. This is in order to ensure that each analysis is relevant to the specific focus of the research questions. The first section looks at the participants' perceptions. This includes their perceptions of their roles and each others' roles, their perceptions of good language learning and teaching and their perceptions of autonomous learning. This is to find out what they think their roles are which shows how they consider themselves as learners and teachers and as partners in learning and teaching as well as how they perceive their roles in relation to each others' roles and institutional requirements. The second section considers the participants' behaviours and practices regarding their learning and teaching modes. It presents the teacher-student relationship and if there is a main responsible party. It then presents how some teachers' modes of teaching are imprinted by a transmission tradition, depository mode of teaching where learners take or are left to take a passive stance in their learning. After that, it presents scaffolding practices from classrooms where teachers help their learners take an active part in their learning and prepare them for the next stage in which teachers gradually hand over more control to learners to exercise more autonomy in their learning. After this, the section provides examples of autonomy-supportive and autonomy-constraining practices from classrooms. These are presented to consolidate the analysis with instances of autonomy-supportive techniques from the context that match autonomy-supportive procedures prescribed from the literature. It then presents constraints that participants have noted to influence their roles in teaching and learning. These are presented in order to help understand why participants behave in certain ways, so as not to build assumptions on their behaviours. The third section of analysis presents different participants' perceptions and understandings of autonomy and their conceptions of the relationship between theory of education

policy and practice in the classrooms, i.e. if there is any discrepancy between theory and practice as well as their accounts of change in education policy in the country.

Before I proceed, I would like to point out that throughout the analysis I will not use participants' real names or pseudonyms because I promised that their real names and identities will never be shown. Therefore, I will use abbreviations and numbers for the different types of participants. So, for example, student number one will be referred to as (S 01); teacher number one will be referred to as (T 01); inspector number one will be referred to as (Insp. 01); head-teacher number one will be referred to as (H-T 01); and parent number one will be referred to as (Par. 01); while I will refer to myself as (R) 'researcher' when presenting extracts from interviews or observations.

4.2 Participants' perceptions

This section focuses on the learners' and teachers' perceptions and interpretations of their roles, each others' roles, their relationships to each other in learning and teaching, their preferences in learning and teaching and their accounts and interpretation of autonomy. Therefore, this section answers the first set of questions of this study. The first part deals with the students' perceptions of their roles, their teachers' roles, and how these roles relate to learner autonomy. Therefore, this part addresses the first research question in relation to learners.

4.2.1 Students' perceptions

This part looks at the students' perceptions and representations of their roles in learning and how they think they should behave in their learning; their perceptions of their teachers' roles and how they perceive their teachers, that is, how they view their teachers in relation to allowing or not allowing them the spaces and the opportunities to work on their learning, and their perceptions of learning and teaching, i.e. what they prefer in learning and in teaching. I then present the students' opinions and understanding of being autonomous and being allowed to work on and taking a share in their learning rather than being passive and dominated by teachers.

In the first part I present the students' perceptions of their roles and what they believe they should or should not do when learning.

4.2.1.1 Students' perceptions of their roles

This part presents students' perceptions of their roles inside the classroom and the school. It looks at what students perceive their roles to be, their preferences in learning and what they think influences their roles, as well as whether they think they are capable of performing their perceived roles or not. It present students' views about following teachers' orders or doing work independently of teachers, whether teachers order students to perform certain roles, whether students perform certain roles that they prefer, and to what extent they are allowed to work on learning autonomously. Primarily, students' perceptions of their roles were associated with work carried out independently of their teachers in, for example, doing presentations, working with colleagues, using the internet, preparing lessons at home, working individually and with colleagues in classes and at home, and practising the language with friends and relatives. However, there were some students who perceived their roles as recipients of knowledge from the teacher.

The main aspects that emerged in the students' responses to the interview questions in this area were categorised according to the degree in which they perceived themselves to be able to perform work independently or collaboratively.

4.2.1.1.1 Succumbing to or challenging the teacher

This theme emerged in some participants' responses to interview questions addressing their perceptions of their roles in their learning. A number of students claimed that they find themselves obliged to follow teachers' orders and succumb to teachers' control in lessons. This was not a general tendency for all students, nor was it the case that students who thought this considered that it applied to all their teachers. However, and although it is unacceptable for the great majority of students, it cannot be denied that a number of students stated that some teachers enforce an authoritarian role on them so they find themselves playing passive roles of 'listeners to teachers'. For example, one student stated:

Some teachers don't let us work on the lessons, for example we do activities together or discuss the topic or so. They only explain and ask questions and we answer and in many times we don't understand, we only repeat the answers without understanding (S 21).

Similarly, student 11 explained:

Sometimes we don't do anything at all except listen to the teacher who explains until the bell rings and we then have homework and that is it. Not all teachers actually do that but there are some and I don't like it.

Such comments by these students as well as other students demonstrate their general tendency to disfavour teachers' modes of controlling and not allowing students to work. This is also illustrated in the remainder of this chapter.

Although students mostly preferred to work on their own and placed a high level of importance on independence and self-reliance as we shall see later, they still appeal to teachers from time to time for help when needed: 'In some lessons we can't do anything by ourselves' (S 28) 'so we need the teacher to help us' (SS 28-29). And as student 17 noted:

I try to depend on myself but when I strive for something I can't understand I go to teacher. For example when I study something I try to depend on myself but when I become weak, I mean I can't, I go to teacher to help me.

This points out that students want to and are capable of working autonomously, as well as showing that students seek teachers' help when they need it, which itself hints that teachers welcome students asking questions when necessary. Teachers' provision of help to students was also evident during classroom observations. Further to this, when asked about what she thinks of working independently of teachers, one student characterised dependence on oneself as follows: 'to know about history it is better that you can remember the dates' (S 12). Students noted that teachers should

allow them to take part in lessons, allow them to answer questions, do exercises and presentations, negotiate exam times, and be flexible about the seating arrangements. One student's justification for this was 'because we can't like find a teacher to help us all the time' (S 28), which is also suggested by Littlewood (1999) as 'it is obvious that no students, anywhere, will have their teachers to accompany them throughout life' (p. 73).

What is more is that some students even challenged teachers' authority and seemed to impose their desire and preference to be autonomous. For example, students 22 and 23 explained: 'Sometimes when the teacher explains only and the class is boring, we ask the teacher to let us work and to make tasks and exercises' (S 23), 'or let us make groups because when teacher always explains and we listen only the class is boring and we don't like it. So we try to make teacher let us work' (S 22).

In relation to the content that the students study, in a number of cases students expressed discontent with the choices of content or activities and noted that they should be given the lead to choose what they study and how they do it, for example: 'I think those who decide material must take students' opinions' (S 02); 'officials choose material but this is not a good idea so I try to design or do activities with my colleagues' (S 17); and 'I think it is not fair and that the students should choose what to study on their own' (S 06). This discontent demonstrates the students' awareness of their needs in terms of what they study and their rejection of having the materials decided by others and forced on them.

Students also seemed to recognise their roles as active and autonomous learners and acknowledged that this is a part of learning that they knew they had to perform, as student 02 summarised when talking about the tasks a student should do: 'I think the preparation of lessons in the house and trying to learn something new by yourself are the most important things that a language learner should do'. Nonetheless, some students' conceptions of their roles were linked to their teachers' practices. For example, a number of students noted that they normally listen to their teachers and do what teachers advise them to do, such as explaining lessons or preparing presentations. Such practices have been shown to be desirable and interesting by many students so they cannot be a sign of succumbing to teachers' orders. One of the

students talking about her role in a lesson explained this as: 'I listen to the teacher first then if I have any questions or comment I give it and some of the teachers ask us to explain' (S 14).

It was clear therefore that students are inclined to and seemed really capable of taking the initiative to work autonomously on lessons in the classroom, and that they refuse to completely surrender to teachers' orders. That students take part in and contribute to their learning and teachers relinquish traditional roles is clearly a preference for the majority of students, though with different degrees of importance. Working in pairs and groups was particularly favoured by many students.

In the next part, I present an aspect that proved to be of great interest to students which is working in pairs and groups.

4.2.1.1.2 Working in pairs and groups

This theme refers to students' perceptions regarding the type of work they see as one part of their roles. Dickinson (1987) argues that pairs and groups are very effective in allowing learners to use the target language communicatively because the learners are freed from the teacher's detailed control. Also, Scharle et al. (2000, p. 8) argue that cooperation and group work lessen learners' reliance on the teacher and increase their reliance on each other and therefore on themselves, as well as involve a higher proportion of students in active work than does whole class work. Therefore, such activities allow learners to work independently of teachers and can be one aspect of their preparedness to learn autonomously. Most of the students in this study considered group work to be one of their roles and was favoured by most of them.

Most of the students perceived working in pairs and groups as one of their roles as learners. This was evident in their responses and they considered it beneficial, interesting and something that makes them confident, they said. Most of them noted that teachers should allow them to work in groups which was prioritised to working individually or in pairs both in and out of class. For example, student 19 said: 'Working in groups is better because in groups we discuss and help each other about new words, questions and so on but alone it is difficult because we need help from each other or the teacher'. Students usually work in groups both in class and outside

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the classroom. Student (17) noted 'Sometimes I work with my colleagues, for example when the teacher is absent I work with them on questions in the book, to write, to prepare lessons', and student (11) pointed out that they work outside the classroom and school: 'I like to work in groups when we prepare a presentation, we meet in one of our houses and work on it'.

Students who perceived group work as one of their roles presented different rationales, e.g. 'Working in groups gives us the opportunity to show our points of view and learn from each other' (S 13), and student 08 noted, 'We sure learn better in groups because when you work with a good group you try to discuss the subject and everyone tells their opinions about the subject'. Therefore, the majority of students' perceptions of having group work as one of their roles were because it provides chances for more efficient learning, a sense of securing confidence and friendliness, and the fact that they would not feel shy when in groups since their levels are relatively close to each other. This was also because students do not feel comfortable enough in the presence of the teacher, as expressed in student 18's opinion: 'We can share information or ideas when we are in groups, we help each other and one wouldn't be shy when working in groups'. It could also be because some teachers do not treat students equally according to several students' statements themselves:

> Teachers should not concentrate on some students and forget about others because this will make the other students lose their confidence and become bored and uninterested (S 15).

However, there were a few students who held a different opinion. For example, one student did not agree with the idea of pair and group work and dismissed it as follows: 'For me, it is the worst thing to work in pairs or groups because there is much disagreement and I feel my effort is lost at the end' (S 02). In a similar vein, another student suggested that only certain types of group work were beneficial: 'I don't like to work with a big group actually, when the group is big there will be a lot of disagreement. So four students is good' (S 10). However, even students who did not express that group work is one of their roles did not seem to be inclined to succumbing totally to teachers.

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That students recognise working in groups, in pairs or individually as parts of their roles entails that they have the cognitive awareness of their roles in learning, that they are aware enough of their duties in learning, and demonstrates their preference towards independent and group work rather than merely succumbing to what they may be used to.

Another activity where students take part in learning is giving classroom presentations. Mostly in lessons where students prepared to present the lesson, the rest of the students sat in groups. Giving presentations had a significant positive effect on students' behaviour inside the classroom.

4.2.1.1.3 Giving presentations

An activity that a lot of the student interviewees mentioned that they do in class and enjoy is giving presentations. This activity was not addressed in the interview questions at the beginning but upon observing lessons I found that it had a significant role in lessons, so I decided to include it in interviews to obtain interviewees' views about it. Although teachers pointed out that this activity is not part of the syllabus, students noted that some of their teachers ask them to do presentations. Student 20 noted 'some teachers make us work, like do presentations', and student 21 noted: 'Sometimes teachers make us explain things and do presentations', while in other cases the students ask their teachers to allow them to do presentations: 'Sometimes we suggest to the teacher to do presentations' (S 28). When I asked some students how the teachers react to their asking to do presentations, the answer was 'She is happy with that' (S 29). Regarding the topic of the presentations, sometimes teachers assign these topics, while at other times students themselves choose the topic of the presentations: 'The teacher asked us to choose any topic that we want' (S 26).

In addition to giving presentations, I also observed students preparing posters and fixing them onto the walls of the classroom. They remove these posters and fix new ones a few classes after putting them on the wall. It was also observed that students prepare files about a topic of their choice, as a number of students pointed out when I asked them during or after classes. These files consisted of some information about a certain topic. The students prepared these and talked about them in front of the class.

The rest of the students could then ask questions or comment and the teacher normally commented, corrected and directed students, usually after the student or students finished their presentation. These files normally differed only in their content, but in presenting them they do not differ from giving normal presentations.

Some students noted that doing presentations in the classroom makes them work independently at home, understand the lessons easily, helps them to build confidence and allows them to practise the language. As student 24 put it:

> Presentations help us work at home because when we have a presentation we prepare for it at home. Also presentations make me confident and not shy and give me chance to practise language and when I do a presentation I understand more.

It was evident from students' comments and views about presentations that they prefer being given the chance to work independently of teachers; they also showed that they are capable of doing tasks and exercising this independence to learn. This was apparent from classroom observations as presented in 4.3.2.2 and 4.3.2.3. Students seemed happy and satisfied when they were given chances to work independently or share with each other or the teacher, or to do independent or group activities such as working together, discussing a point when the teacher allows them to express their views, asking questions and answering each other, unlike when the teacher takes the reins of the lesson and they mostly sit in silence. This is an indication that teachers help their students to be active partners in learning and to do learning independently or under teachers' indirect guidance and direction. This also shows that learners have the courage and ability to ask their teachers for opportunities to work according to their needs or most desirable ways of learning, to which teachers apparently react positively.

Also, what I have seen during some students' presentations was that they were quite confident and it was clear that they were happy and preferred this activity and mode of learning. Before one presentation, some students told me that they were going to give presentations and asked me to attend. They were enthusiastic and eager for the experience. I thought this could be because this experience was new to them, but a

number of students told me that they used to give presentations in previous years. It is noteworthy here that during their current year, the third and final year, teachers stressed that they faced the challenge of covering all the material because exams are standardised at the level of the whole country and they will be blamed if they do not cover all the material (This issue is discussed more fully in 4.3.4).

However, there were a few students who expressed their disfavour about giving presentations in front of teachers and the class because they said they lacked confidence and they were too shy to do this. They sometimes blamed teachers for not providing enough encouragement and cooperation to make them confident enough to undertake such activities. As student 21 noted, 'Teacher must be friendly with us...., make class interesting and active like make us work and explain, do presentations', and student 18 noted that teachers should be 'understanding our efforts and abilities... and of course be friendly'. This makes students more confident and therefore allows them to follow the modes of learning they prefer. The students' criticism of some teachers not adapting or letting them work independently is another indication that students are psychologically prepared and aware of their preferred modes and activities in learning. They repeatedly stress that these approaches result in better learning, either through directly helping their comprehension of lessons or, by being enjoyable and desirable, adapting their attitudes towards lessons.

Giving presentations showed clearly that it helps students work on their own, collect information for their presentations, organise them, and practise their language. It also helps them develop the courage to speak in front of their colleagues and the teacher. This last point relates to a lot of students' views about the importance of practising language freely, although most of them suggested speaking with native speakers. It also makes students more confident, as well as being more useful for them as they note out that when they contribute in learning they will understand more easily and will not forget quickly.

A parallel activity that was prominent through students' responses to interview questions and during classroom observations was students explaining lessons.

4.2.1.1.4 Explaining lessons

Students' explanation of lessons differs from doing presentations in that it takes the form of explaining a topic from the prescribed textbooks, whereas in presentations the topic can be from outside the textbooks. Several students expressed that explanation of lessons by the teachers alone is boring and ineffective as well as leading to forgetting information quickly and easily. A lot of them therefore preferred preparing lessons at home and explaining them in class, which they associated with a greater interest in learning, resulting in good comprehension of lessons and giving them confidence. They depicted this as one part of their role as students learning a language, however they sometimes only explained lessons after the teacher asked them to prepare and present lessons in front of the class. Student 25 explained this as:

> Sometimes teachers make us do presentations and explain lessons. I
> prepare the lesson at home and the teacher gives me some time to
> explain it to the class. Sometimes when I speak in front of the class
> I become nervous and shy.

Another student who also approved of teachers letting them explain lessons noted that 'one teacher always says 'who wants to explain the lesson?' It is a good idea to try to explain the lesson for my colleagues' (S 08).

Explaining lessons for most of the students is helpful, interesting and highly desirable. However, not all teachers allow students to practise this in their classes. Such teachers seemed to do all the work by themselves whereas students were reticent and passive (This is detailed in 4.3.2.1). In such cases, some students seemed to challenge teachers' authority. As one student said, 'I try to participate in every possible way' (S 12). In other cases, when students are not allowed to explain lessons in the class, some of their teachers ask them to prepare lessons at home then these teachers explain lessons by themselves. Student 29 noted this as: 'In most of the lessons the teacher asks us to prepare at first then she explains to us'.

However, there were some students who showed their preference for teachers explaining the lesson, ranging from favouring completely listening to the teacher's

explanation and almost complete devotion to teachers' orders: 'I do everything the teacher says' (S 04), and: 'I only sit down and listen to the teacher, when I have a question I try to ask the teacher' (S 01), to taking part in discussions about the lesson and considering the teachers' explanation in class, either an addition to their previous preparation of the lesson at home: 'After preparing the lesson,... we try to discuss it with the teacher' (S 11), or a form of basic explanation which they revise at home after attending the class: 'If I don't understand anything I study it again at home' (S 24).

This variation in students' preferences and understanding of their own and teachers' roles is normal. It may well mean that students follow their own desirable approaches and practise their preferred modes of learning, including those who expect the teacher to undertake the biggest part of work and they, the students, follow the teachers' orders precisely.

In the next part, I present students' conceptions about their teachers: what their beliefs about their teachers and teachers' practices are, and how they interpret their teachers' practices and behaviour with them.

4.2.1.2 Students' perceptions of teachers' roles

In this part, I present students' perceptions about teachers, first about their teachers and the practices of these teachers as seen by the students, whether students think their teachers provide them with chances and the space to study without being controlled or not and how they look at their teachers and whether they are content with what teachers provide them with. After looking at these, I discuss students' expectations of good teachers and what students perceive good teachers to do and how they behave with them. This is in order to present a view of how close the students' expectations of their teachers and the teachers' real practices are and whether students are satisfied with their teachers or not.

I start by presenting students' conceptions of their teachers.

4.2.1.2.1 Students' views about their teachers

Students' perceptions of their roles clearly revealed their confidence in their abilities to work autonomously. When it comes to their perceptions of teachers' roles, they show that they believe that teachers are not the only figures in learning and teaching and should not be authoritative, and that students should be partners in working on their learning. They also make it evident that they are aware of the importance of taking part in learning rather than leaving it to be performed by the teachers. This was clear in their views in the interviews as well as in their activeness during the classroom observations when allowed to work actively. Themes that emerged from the interviews and observations included students referring to teachers' explanations, teachers sharing work and allowing students to explain, and teachers giving freedom to students in learning. These will be considered separately to try to demonstrate students' views of their teachers' roles.

These themes are presented according to the degree of teachers' control: from learning controlled by teachers, to sharing with students, to teachers mostly relinquishing control and students taking more active stances in the process. I start in the following part by presenting students' conceptions of teachers who explain lessons and do not provide students with opportunities to participate in their learning

4.2.1.2.1.1 **Teachers explaining**

In a few instances, students showed that teachers sometimes do the explanations themselves and students are asked to sit quietly and listen. They noted that they are only rarely allowed or invited to contribute. Only a small number of students preferred teachers who explain lessons and do the work and they passively receive knowledge: 'I think the teacher who explains everything is better' (S 01), and:

> I prefer the teacher who explains everything for us because when
> the teacher explains everything, all my thinking will be on the
> lesson and I will understand it well... so we don't need to study it at
> home (S 09).

Student 10 stated: 'I prefer the one who explains everything for us because this is very comfortable for me'. Such students who preferred the teacher to explain the lessons while they listened without working seemed to do so because they did not like to work on their lessons at home. So it might be laziness and unwillingness to work at home rather than the usefulness of or their preference for the teacher's explanation that make them prefer the teacher explaining. Still, these students seem to recognise their preference rather than being used to a certain mode of learning.

However, most students expressed their discontent and boredom when they are not allowed to work according to their preferences. They noted that this leads to boredom, not understanding the lesson and even to disliking the teacher or the subject. Student 20 explained this as: 'I think the teacher who explains everything is not good'. Mostly students said that teachers allow them spaces to practise their language in the classroom, to perform learning, to do activities they prefer or ask for, to work together, etc. This leads to another view of students about teachers' roles that emerged in the interviews.

4.2.1.2.1.2 Teachers sharing work with students

This theme refers to students' perceptions of teachers who provide them with chances to take a share of working on lessons along with teachers as well as with each other. In several cases, students showed that they preferred teachers sharing working on lessons with them and allowing them opportunities to discuss lessons, tasks, etc. either with teachers themselves or with other students. For example, although she noted she has a problem in working in pairs and groups because of the low level of some of her colleagues, she noted: 'I prefer working together with others and the teacher, it is better than teachers always explain and do not let us work' (S 04). Student 05 showed complete agreement with her colleague's (S4) opinion: 'Yes, me too. I prefer this'.

One aspect in which teachers share working on lessons with students that was very prominent in students' responses was the teachers allowing students to work in collaboration with them. That is, teachers do not entirely do the work on the lesson nor let students work completely independently. This is one crucial technique for

supporting autonomy in learners. That is, involving students through sharing responsibility with them in their learning process (Dörnyei, 2001). Student 20 expressed her view about such work as: 'We can't do everything by ourselves; we need help from the teacher. So half work by myself and with help from the teacher'. Also, student 15 pointed out a similar view: 'Actually I like the teacher who explains everything but at the same time I like the teacher who asks and gives us tasks to do because I like to understand as I like to work'. This view was the most prominent amongst students. That is, they mostly preferred neither the teacher who does everything while they sit and watch and listen, nor the type of teacher who leaves them completely on their own without guidance or help. Students 26 and 27, commenting on one of the teachers' (T 06) classes, explained this in the following extract and why such classes are particularly interesting:

> S 26: Because we work in groups ...do conversations together, we
> learn more

> S 27: Yes and share everything

> R: Share, share with the other students or with the teacher as well?

> S 27: With the students and the teacher, yes together. We don't feel
> that we are students and she is the teacher. Sometimes we feel we
> are all teachers. We all explain to each other and sometimes we
> explain even to the teacher. We feel that she is a student, like us.

I noticed during observations that students were very enthusiastic when the time of this teacher's class came. They hurried to the room where they take this class where the seats are arranged in circles or they can shape them in the way they preferred or sometimes in the way that the teacher asked them to. It was evident from the students' behaviour in that class that they were really satisfied with the teacher's way of teaching and behaving with them, and they were really motivated. This might very well be because they had chances to work on their lessons and had good opportunities to share ideas and work independently of the teacher and very much with each other.

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The third type of students' views about their teachers showed the type of teachers who allow them independence to work.

4.2.1.2.1.3 **Teachers giving freedom**

This category shows students' views on teachers who provide the most chances to work independently. A number of students described some teachers as allowing them opportunities and open spaces for them to work independently. These teachers followed different modes in providing spaces for students to work on their own, and also adopted different roles such as supervising students, helping when help is called for, and assessing the progress of students. Examples of students' views about their teachers relinquishing authority to them and playing such roles include: 'Some teachers let us learn by ourselves, they don't talk and explain the lesson then ask questions. They make us work, explain lessons and do presentations' (S 16); 'In some lessons we work by ourselves, usually together and the teacher helps sometimes' (S 24); 'Sometimes we work by ourselves on the lessons like prepare the lessons and explain them and do presentations' (S 07); and:

> Sometimes we work on lessons like do exercises together and the
> teacher helps and looks at us, and sometimes we prepare lessons
> and explain them in class and ask each other and discuss them and
> also prepare presentations and give them in the class and discuss
> them together and the teacher helps if we have something difficult
> (S 12).

These situations where learners described their teachers offering opportunities for them to work independently show that teachers are often happy to relinquish control to their students. Students' perceptions of such situations of playing active roles in their learning were a preference for most of the students and were positive compared to their perceptions of teachers who do not allow them to work as such. They referred to such situations as providing an appropriate and suitable environment for effective learning.

In the following part, I provide accounts of what students perceive good teachers do. These include criticism from some students of some of their teachers. These accounts

help illustrate more the students' conceptions of whether they are satisfied with their teachers' practices or not and their expectations from teachers.

4.2.1.2.2 Students' perceptions of good teachers

This part differs from the previous one in that it presents students' preferences of good teachers, what their expectations of good teachers are, and how they would like their teachers to be, rather than their experience with their own teachers.

Themes that emerged in students' conceptions of good teachers concern four main issues: teachers should encourage students, they should treat students equally for students to maintain motivation and interest in lessons, they should be friendly with them and they should be instructive rather than authoritative or leading.

4.2.1.2.2.1 **Encouraging**

This issue could be linked to students' motivation, which has proved to be a necessary component in an effective learning classroom through students' responses and observations. Most of the students pointed out that they preferred the type of teacher who encourages and motivates them to work both independently and collaboratively. They noted that those teachers who encourage them to work and who are friendly with them make them feel more comfortable and confident and therefore affect their learning positively. This preference was not exclusive to teachers who encourage students to work independently, but applied also to those who encourage them to have choices in different aspects of learning such as leaving the class for a short time, arriving late without reprimanding them, listening to their suggestions about giving presentations and about assigning dates of exams where possible, and allowing or accepting students' interference while the teacher is talking. Students 04 and 05 explained how they perceive teachers who encourage them to learn:

> S 05: The good teacher makes the students understand the main idea
> without a lot of details and then lets students work on the lesson but
> must help them and encourage them so they become strong to learn.
> The good teacher encourages students to understand the lesson but
> not shouts at them when they don't understand.

R: What do you [S4] think?

S 04: Yes, I think the teacher should let students work and also encourage them to learn and not depend on the teacher a lot.

Quite a lot of the students expressed their opinions that encouragement is a characteristic of a good teacher. Teachers' encouragement of students can take several forms such as giving freedom, sharing with students, being friendly with them and sometimes facilitating lessons through explaining difficult parts. These choices of students, including seeking teachers' help to explain difficult parts, may well be considered a sign of students' awareness of their preferences and tendencies in learning. This is because some of them expressed, unsurprisingly, that they cannot work on all aspects of learning on their own, as well as because it is their own choice and they do not seem to be forced to follow or choose this way.

Another category that emerged in the students' perceptions of good teachers is teachers not showing preferential treatment and treating students unequally.

4.2.1.2.2.2 **Non-discriminatory behaviour**

Many students expressed that an important characteristic of good teachers is treating students equally. This might be because some teachers treat their students differently, although throughout observations, I have not witnessed teachers differentiating between students in this way.

Student 03 explained her belief as follows: 'The good teacher must treat all students fairly.... The equality between students makes them feel secure and they will like the teacher more'. Student 21 showed a similar view: 'A good teacher must... not make difference between students', and student 19's comment was also similar 'A good teacher should...make students equal and show no difference between them'. Teachers' differentiation between students was considered by many students as a source of demotivation and hating classes, subjects and even teachers themselves in some cases. Because of this influence on their learning, students have expressed that one of the characteristics of good teachers is not treating students differently.

Another category that students raised as a characteristic of good teachers is being friendly with them.

4.2.1.2.2.3 **Friendly**

Another category that has been prominent in students' responses regarding teachers' behaviour with them is being friendly. A considerable number of students noted that they would prefer their teachers to be friendly and treat them in an informal way. Students did however also note that some of their teachers are indeed friendly. Students pointed out that friendliness of teachers towards students has considerably affected students' behaviour as well as their roles making them more active, interested and making the class more enjoyable. For example, student 09 pointed out that she prefers not to ask the teacher if she has a question because some teachers, she said 'will embarrass me, or if the teacher does not know the answer she will think that I want to embarrass her'. Student 25 noted that teachers' unfriendliness with students can lead to boredom and disinterest on the part of the students: R: 'When is a class boring for you?' S 25: 'Usually when the topic is not interesting for me or when the teacher is not friendly and very serious'.

Some students described good teachers in this regard as follows: 'A good teacher must ...be friendly with us' (S 21); 'A good teacher must be friendly with us, not like some teachers here who are not friendly' (S 25); for student 18, a good teacher is one 'who understands our efforts and abilities,..., and of course who is friendly'. Student 28 explained it as:

> A good teacher is the one who behaves with students well ... not
> shouting, smile on her face, tries not to make the lesson boring ...
> tries to make all the class active with her like not staying in the
> same place and explaining ... to make us contact with her (S 28).

In classroom observations, it was indeed noted that although some teachers were really friendly and have an informal relationship with students, there were a few who were quite serious and seemed too formal and unfriendly. This was clear in teachers' behaviour with the students such as their serious reactions to the students' interruptions or asking for delaying an exam.

Therefore, most of the students stressed that teachers being friendly with them, not shouting, and treating them all equally would lead, in their words, to making them confident, not shy and making the lessons interesting; and they perceived it as a characteristic of good teachers.

4.2.1.2.2.4 **Instructor/ helper**

Another emergent theme that students have perceived as one of the characteristics of good teachers concerns the teacher's role as instructor, guide or helper. With the preference of many students to sharing learning rather than learning completely individually, it is understandable that students aspire for teachers to be facilitators and guides rather than directors in the process of learning. Students who have seen this characteristic as one of the characteristics of good language teachers noted that teachers should put the task in the hands of the students and adopt the role of facilitators in performing the process of learning. Therefore, learners give themselves a role in learning in which they become active rather than being dependent on teachers. These views of students varied but they usually ascribed similar roles to the teachers as a guide and facilitator. For example, student 13 suggested that a good language teacher is one who:

> Gives the students the subject of the lesson and lets them discuss it,
> this way the teacher makes us pay more attention and learn better,
> and he should help us if we have problems or difficult things and in
> how to work on lessons.

Another student explained her view of the teacher as helper as follows: 'I think the good teacher gives new ideas to students and asks them to work on them so students cooperate with teacher and together' (S 17). Other students noted their opinions of a good teacher as a facilitator as: 'I learn at home without teacher but I need help from teacher always as instruction to explain difficult lessons or grammar' (S 06), and: 'Not everything I can learn by myself. Sometimes I need help from the teacher. She knows more but I learn by myself at home or in groups' (S 19).

Different students gave different representations of good teachers. However, the representations discussed here have been the most recurrent and relevant. Other

conceptions of good teachers by students include making students motivated and simplifying subjects: 'They should try to simplify the subject as much as possible and make the class fun and make a good teacher student relationship so that the students will like the material more' (S 12); using modern methods of teaching:

> A good teacher should try to use the modern way of teaching by using projector and show us videos which talk about the lesson because this way makes you understand more and draws your attention whereas the traditional way like the teacher explains everything you will feel bored (S 11).

And allowing students to work in different ways:

> S 31: Be kind with us and lets us like answer some questions not just enter the class and explain the lesson and go, and lets us work like in groups and do some activities in the class to help us to remember and understand the lesson better.

> S 30: It is the same actually.

The students' representations of good teachers demonstrated that they are inclined toward sharing learning and being in control of their learning rather than dependence on teachers. They showed that good teachers are not those who constrain students' freedom and choices and abilities but those who invest in students' readiness to work independently and to meet their desires in learning. Such students complement their preference for teachers who allow them spaces and chances to work with the usefulness of such modes of learning for their comprehension of lessons, maintaining their motivation and creating an atmosphere in which they feel their needs are accommodated for performing their learning efficiently.

In line with students' perceptions of good teachers and what they prefer in a teacher, in the next part I present perceptions of what they prefer in terms of classroom atmosphere, layout and type of activities.

4.2.1.3 Students' perceptions of learning and teaching

In this part, I present what the students perceive as appropriate modes of learning and teaching and what they consider to be an atmosphere that is appropriate for their learning, in relation to autonomy of learners and control by teachers. That is, whether they perceive good learning and teaching to be learner driven or teacher controlled. This is presented in order to examine their preferences in learning and teaching which then helps in looking at their beliefs of the learning-teaching process and of learner autonomy.

4.2.1.3.1 Students' preferences

This part is concerned with the preferences that students raised in the interviews. This part primarily includes their preferences for the types of work and the seating arrangements they like. These themes emerged in response to what students perceived as a good and appropriate atmosphere that could offer them opportunities of being autonomous and guarantee a good learning environment for them. 'Good' here refers not to an ideal situation but to what they believed to be appropriate for them, and to what allows and helps them to learn effectively and in particular autonomously.

4.2.1.3.1.1 **Group work**

This theme arose as one of the students' most preferable types of work. This category refers here to the students' perceptions of effective learning and teaching and therefore differs from the category group work presented earlier (4.2.1.1.2) because that was one of the students' perceptions of their roles.

Students working in groups means they are cooperating together. Cooperation has been noted as one important part of being autonomous (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 101). This aspect was mentioned by almost all the student interviewees as a favourable and desirable activity providing an appropriate learning atmosphere for them. This has been perceived both as accommodating their need to be in control of their learning and mitigating teachers' pressure or control on them; as a result, they noted, it leads to greater motivation and more efficient learning. Working in groups was for the

majority of the students preferred to working individually, and was justified because: 'Making groups is very interesting, we like the lesson more' (S 28); 'It is useful' (S 32); and 'We will learn better when in groups' (SS 32, 33). Also, students 26 and 27 explained their perceptions of group work as follows:

> S 27: For example, in speaking we are studying in another class [referring to the class where seats are in circles as observed] and we are working as groups, you know, I discuss everything with my colleagues, discuss the topic and give opinions, it depends on us more than the teacher.

> R: It depends on you more than the teacher?

> S27: Yes, and my role is, you know, bigger.

> S26: I like the way of Ms ... [T 06], in groups, discuss it in the way from us, I can give her something and I can learn from her more than explaining it by her, it is more beautiful and more interesting. ... Yes I like in groups more than individual.

In most of the students' views there was an inclination towards a certain degree of dependence on teachers as facilitators or counsellors to help them when they face difficulties or to map out plans to work accordingly. When asked whether they prefer working in groups because they have chances to talk to each other and move around or because it is more effective and better for their learning, students explained that working in groups is 'very interesting' (S 28), and 'we learn more' (S 29).

There were, however, a few students who expressed that they do not enjoy group work and tend to prefer complete independence from teachers and some have gone to favouring learning and working on lessons at home over coming to school. For example, student 04 explained her opinion of working in pairs and groups as:

> I think that pair and group work is a bad idea. My problem with pairs is my colleague's level is very low, she cannot do anything

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well and when there is group work, there is chatting and everyone

wants to take control. So I prefer to work alone.

And when asked about group work, student 14 noted: 'Not all the time because some information can't be shared'.

Though students are generally inclined to work in groups, there were some problems that made a few students not completely in favour of group work. For example, student 07 stated that she does not prefer to work in a large group; and for student 04, the problem with group work is when she had to work with lower ability or lazy students. Also, student 27 complained about taking part in a discussion with lower level students:

Once, I came in a group of speaking they were all low level

students so I couldn't do anything, no one shared with me, I only

just think alone and get the ideas alone and explain alone, no one

shared with me. That would be bad for me.

Such students' perceptions of preferring not to take part in group work with colleagues are not a sign of their unpreparedness or not being allowed to work as such. Rather, they show students' readiness and awareness of their preferences and inclinations without such a mode being forced on them.

However, in observations, it was evident that most students preferred working in groups. I observed that when they were asked to form groups to discuss a topic, they were quite enthusiastic and happy. They showed their satisfaction with and commitment to working in groups through activities such as discussing the topic then assigning a representative to give a summary of the group's understanding. They seemed to be completely satisfied when they were permitted to share the discussion with each other as well as with the teacher, completely opposite to when they were asked to only listen to the teacher.

Generally, students preferred group work and considered it to be more effective than individual work or dependence on the teacher. They mostly attributed this to understanding lessons better, being more relaxed and motivated, exchanging ideas

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and helping each other. However, students never seemed to fully discharge teachers from the learning process. They mentioned that good teachers are not those who are completely absent from the scene but those who offer help and guidance without entering the students' own preferred working environment, which was mostly collaborative. Working in groups has mostly been entwined with the arrangement of seats in small circles, which is another category that emerged in students' responses to their preferences in learning. This is discussed next.

4.2.1.3.1.2 **Seating**

This category emerged repeatedly as one of the students' preferences where they described seats that are arranged in circles of small groups as being preferred to those in rows. The students have given different reasons for their preference of seats in circles. For example, student 08 said that:

> When in rows, sitting at the back means there will be a lot of noise
> and I can't listen to the teachers and can't understand very well ...
> so seats in circles are better because all students pay more attention
> and the teacher can see all of them.

Students sometimes justified their preference for seats in circles as: 'I prefer seats in circles because we can discuss things that we couldn't do in rows of desks' (S 14); 'In circles students will be more active and share ideas with each other' (S 12); and it is 'better and more useful and interesting' (S 22), as well as because 'We discuss with friends and share information and I am not shy when seats are in circles' (S 21). Also students described these as providing spaces for working together, discussion, and exchanging ideas and information, resulting in increased motivation and in better learning. In addition to students' preference for this type of arrangement, one of the teachers expressed her preference for and view of seats in circles as: 'The seats in this way [in lines] is not suitable for high school' (T 04). When I asked this teacher why she does not arrange the seats in circles or let students arrange their seating as they prefer, she answered: 'I tried to make them in circles before ... but they are attached [to the ground]' (T 04). So, students were not alone in their preference for arranging seats in circles. Some teachers had the chance to use a particular room

where seats were not fixed to the ground and could be moved and arranged according to their preference. However, this room was almost always busy with different classes, so not all teachers had the chance to use this room or arrange the seats as they or their students liked.

There were a few students who expressed their preference for neither rows nor circle arrangements of seating but who favoured individual seating. Student 03, when asked whether she preferred seats to be arranged in rows or circles or in another configuration, said 'I find these very bad arrangements, I do not prefer any one of them. I prefer individual seats'. Similarly, student 05 expressed discontent with these two choices of seating arrangement: 'I don't agree with both choices. I prefer individual desks because it is very comfortable especially if your partner is annoying and a cheater'. However, there were only these two students who did not prefer seats to be arranged in circles. Therefore, the majority of students were in favour of seats being arranged in circles. This is supported by my observations in classrooms. When students move from a classroom where seats are in rows to another where the seats are in circles, they hurry and seem interested and enthusiastic as well as active during the lesson. This was the observation of all the cases I witnessed when students moved from a room with rows of seats to a room with seats in circles. It was also noted during observations that in classrooms with seats in rows, students seemed to be less active, enthusiastic or interested than when they were in a room with seats in circles. Their behaviour clearly exhibited that they preferred seats in circles. This might not be because of the positions of the seats themselves but could be attributed to the methods that teachers follow when in such classrooms. However, students have expressed their views of classrooms with seats in circles as more comfortable for working, so this type of seating arrangement clearly affects students' behaviour positively as it accommodates their preference for working together and allowing space for working collaboratively.

In the following part, I present students' perceptions of being offered spaces and opportunities to work autonomously on their learning and not simply listening to and being dominated by teachers.

4.2.1.4 Students' perceptions of being autonomous

This part deals with how students perceive working on their learning without extensive interference from teachers and how they look at the concept of autonomy in their learning. These perceptions have been approached by dividing students' views about the advantages and disadvantages of autonomy, of being allowed to learn actively and responsibly, and their perceptions of their willingness to work as such.

4.2.1.4.1 Students' perceptions of advantages and disadvantages of autonomy

This category emerged when students were asked about what they think of being allowed to work actively on their learning and working without teachers being overly directive: whether it helps or constrains development in learning. For most of the students, taking autonomous stances in learning was considered a facilitating factor and had advantages for learning. The feasibility of taking control of learning was evident in many of the students' views about it. Student 13 noted that taking active roles to learn 'helps us to learn what we love'. Student 03 pointed out that being independent allows you to 'learn what, when, how you want'. Other students noted the advantage of being independent in that learning independently helps understanding and 'information will fix in the mind and cannot be forgotten easily' (S 04), and 'in working independently, the stuff that you have learnt will stay with you for a long time because you were the one who did all the work and will absolutely remember all of it' (S 12). For student 08, learning independently makes you 'try to understand the lesson by yourself with no help from the teacher'.

Examples of advantages of being active in learning were classes being interesting and students being motivated as a result of working in groups and watching videos. For example, I asked two students about the class they prefer and why, they noted the following: 'Because we work in groups and watch videos, do conversations together, learn more' (S 26); 'Yes and share everything' (S 27). Also, some students' responses directly linked working actively and collaboratively to becoming interested and motivated. Student 16 said: 'When we work according to our ideas we will be more interested and motivated', and student 24 explained: 'I think being free affects

learning positively. When I am free to learn I will like learning more and it will be interesting and useful, and will make me work hard when I am free to learn'. However, for other students, this type of learning has disadvantages. One student did not see any advantages in it: 'I can't see any advantages' (S 15). For student 16, being autonomous makes students 'face a lot of problems such as sophisticated lessons'; however, this student noted that it helps to 'improve or develop ourselves'. Some other students stressed that the role of the teacher is important in that without a teacher 'it is hard to find the correct information' (S 10), which suggests that such students are inclined to depend on their teachers.

These views of students make it clear that they are aware of different roles they may play in learning and the benefits of each, as well as that they are able to decide for themselves the mode of learning they consider appropriate for them. This is supported by most of the students' representations of their own and their teachers' roles discussed earlier. In the next part, I present whether these students think they are allowed or not allowed chances and the space to work according to their desired modes and in particular to work autonomously.

4.2.1.4.2 Students' perceptions of being allowed to be autonomous

In this category, I present students' perceptions of being allowed or not allowed the space, the opportunities and the environment to work actively and according to their preferences, and above all autonomously. Students' responses in this regard varied and sometimes contradicted each other. This might be because of different interpretations of the concept of taking control of learning by different students although I tried to make questions as clear as possible for them and insisted that they ask for clarification whenever there was ambiguity about something. Before proceeding to present students' views, I clarify that autonomy here refers to students working either in collaboration with other students and teachers or with little or no help from teachers.

Some students showed that they have opportunities to work independently of teachers, at least in situations when they do not need to depend on teachers. This was shown by some students in the following comments: student 21 stated: 'I think I'm

free in learning because I do what I like in learning'; student 07 pointed out: 'Yes, I am self-reliant. Whatever the teacher is good or not, I like to depend on myself'; and student 13 commented: 'I think I'm free to learn the way I like ... and I consider myself self-reliant'. However, other students showed that they are not allowed and do not have the space to take responsibility for their learning. For example, students 22 and 23 explained it as follows:

> S 22: Not really free to learn and study the way I like. As I told you teachers don't always let us work independently of them especially this year maybe because they want to finish the curriculum.

> S 23: I think so also. Teachers don't always make us work as we want and I think they want to finish the books.

However, these two students added that they do work and learn on their own away from teachers:

> S 23: I'm not completely self-reliant. I try to work on lessons on my own because not all teachers explain well and some are boring.

> S 22: I try to learn by myself because teachers will not teach us everything and in the university teachers will not teach us everything and we have to work and learn alone.

Another student pointed out that she does not have opportunities to take responsibility in learning: 'I'm not free to learn and work as I like' (S 01). Student 02 noted: 'I don't think I am free at all', but added: 'I think I am a self-reliant learner, because I try to understand the lesson or the idea of it by myself, even before the teacher gives it'. This student's view could be interpreted as lacking the space and environment to follow learning modes she prefers; she still considers herself self-reliant as she works on her learning independently. It might be inferred that this student, although she lacks the freedom to work independently, is aware of its importance and benefits and does work independently to the extent that she is able to do so. When such students were asked why they perceived themselves as not able to perform their roles in learning according to their preferences, they mentioned a

number of constraints which seemed to be imposed on them in their final year, as student 09 illustrated: 'In this year I think we're not free to learn the way that we want'. Such constraints include some teachers' behaviour and modes of teaching: 'Not with all teachers I'm free, some teachers listen to us and some no' (S 16); the material they study: 'No I don't think so because we have to go with what the book says and we can't change that' (S 12); and sometimes culture: 'I think being a responsible learner in our culture is not very much acceptable because teachers are usually hard and formal with students' (S 25).

Students' views in this category demonstrated that they were aware of what taking responsibility refers to, in spite of the differences in their perceptions. Although some noted that they are not free, they mostly showed that they recognise the feasibility of their taking control of their learning and being active learners and some made it clear that they do work autonomously, notwithstanding the influence of some constraints on them, such as some teachers' modes of teaching. Moreover, their recognition of not being allowed to be active in their learning is in itself a signal of their awareness of the issue disregarding whether they support it or not.

In the next part, this issue is complemented by presenting the students' perceptions of their desire to be autonomous or whether they reject this learning approach.

4.2.1.4.3 Students' perceptions of their desire to be autonomous

This category is considered necessary in exploring learners' capability and readiness to be autonomous. It might to some extent have been demonstrated in the previous parts, however I focus here on whether students are willing and have the desire to be autonomous or whether they retreat from it even if they have an environment that accommodates their needs for that. Therefore, this category differs in that it presents the students' own desires and willingness rather than looking at appropriate environment and suitable circumstances to be autonomous. Students often showed that they are willing to be responsible for their learning. Student 19 explained this as:

> I like to work separately from teachers. This is good for me, but not
> everything I can learn by myself. Sometimes I need help from the

teacher. She knows more but I learn by myself at home or in groups.

Student 07 put it as: 'I like to depend on myself, especially because some teachers make mistakes and some of them are slow in teaching. I try to study alone'; and student 06 noted that she is willing to be responsible for her learning because it helps her to depend on herself: 'I would like and prefer being free to learn because it helps you to depend on yourself'.

Although students mostly expressed their willingness to learn independently of teachers, they very often did not ignore or deny the teachers' roles as helpers or facilitators on whom they depend when they have difficulties or do not desire to take responsibility, or when teachers do not allow them. Students 22 and 23, for example, said:

> S 22: I don't like to depend on teachers very much because I'm in final year and in college I will have to work independently most of the time. Sometimes I have to depend on teachers because I can't do all things by myself.

> S 23: I like to work on learning and my lessons by myself because it is good and in school teachers will not explain everything, but I also need help from teachers sometimes, so I also depend on teachers.

In addition to their responses in the interviews, students' behaviour in classrooms clearly showed their willingness to be active workers in their learning rather than mere listeners. This was also evident in their preference for teachers who allowed them chances to work independently and in groups and space in order to be responsible for their own learning. They referred to this as interesting and more useful as well as making them more motivated and helping them remember what they learn. However, there were a few students who showed unwillingness to be in control of their learning. For example, student 15 pointed out: 'I prefer the teacher to give us the lesson and explain and so on because if the teachers make us free to work we won't learn'. However, such perspectives were very rare.

Having looked at the students and presented their perceptions of their own and their teachers' roles, their perceptions of good teachers, their preferences in learning and teaching and their perceptions, readiness and understanding of being autonomous, in the next part, I present the teachers' conceptions of their roles, of their students, of good learning and teaching and their perceptions of allowing learners chances to learn autonomously.

4.2.2 Teachers' perceptions

This part presents the teachers' representations of their roles in relation to whether they involve learners in learning or exclude them from working on learning; their perceptions of their students; their perceptions of good learning and teaching; and their conceptions of learners being autonomous and active in learning and what they understand by autonomy.

In the first part I present the teachers' perceptions of their roles and what they think they should or should not do when teaching and dealing with students.

4.2.2.1 Teachers' perceptions of their roles

This part looks at how teachers perceive their own roles, particularly in relation to aiding their students to be engaged in learning autonomously and with regard to dominating classes and acting as authorities where learners are not allowed opportunities to work independently on their learning. The themes are chosen as representations of teachers' readiness to allowing their learners chances to take responsibility for their learning. Therefore, in line with what Thavenius (1999) argues, the teacher who aids learners and provides the environment for them to behave autonomously is by definition an autonomous teacher, whereas the one who deprives learners of chances to take control of their learning is a non-autonomous teacher. Therefore, teachers' perceptions of these themes are presented here. The themes are sequenced from those teachers who believe they should allow students the space and opportunities to be involved in learning, to those who are less flexible on this aspect of learning.

4.2.2.1.1 Involving students / Engaging students

In this category I present teachers' conceptions and opinions of their involvement of students in their learning; how teachers look at engaging their learners in learning and, if they so agree, how they do this. Generally, teachers were inclined towards adopting roles where they involve students and distance themselves from controlling the classes as teacher 01 explained:

> We don't want to have traditional forms here when we teach, the teacher explains and the students just receive, this is a bad way, better to work in groups, to give them the idea and they work together and it is better to use communicative approach, more communication with the students and the teacher. The teacher is not to correct for students all the time, or just to explain and they receive, it is better to exchange ideas with the students.

Also, teacher 02 noted that she works on involving learners in working on lessons:

> Every lesson, I have to do group works or give them a topic and let every two girls work together and find the answer, or write a paragraph or even sentences. These strategies, I use a lot in my subject, in writing (T 02).

Also, teacher 07 noted that she involves her students when they show desire for that:

> If I have some expression to write a sentence, they ask me about how and why, I just ask them to look at the question to read it because when I give them everything and I explain everything they won't work, they won't cooperate with me. But it depends on the topic.

And teacher 14 noted: 'sometimes I ask 'what do you think about the pictures?' and students comment and so, I give them chance to think'.

The two main themes that emerged under this category were teachers helping students to work autonomously and teachers facilitating independent work for their

students. The main difference here is that helping students mainly refers to teachers providing help to students when students ask for or seem in need of their teachers' help, while facilitation refers to teachers initiating and providing the appropriate atmosphere for students to work independently of them. Therefore, teachers who facilitate for students to work independently can be considered to be more supportive of autonomous learning for their students than those who provide help when asked for. The teachers who facilitate independence create an autonomy-supportive environment for students while those who provide help when needed do not create autonomy-supportive environment until students show willingness or ask for it.

4.2.2.1.1.1 **Helping students**

The help that teachers offer to students is one aspect of providing and creating the appropriate atmosphere to their students as well as a sign of their agreement to allow learners to take on learning by themselves. I present here the teachers' views about providing help to their students.

Teachers' perceptions in regard to providing help for their students revolved around a number of practices and activities that teachers follow to help students. These ranged from the teacher explaining parts of the lesson to learners, to providing help to them so they can learn independently. Teachers mostly pointed out that they value the fact that their students ask for help, are active and are responsible for their learning which, some of them noted, is better for them as well as for their students. For example, teacher 12 pointed out: 'I like those students who ask for clarification, try to study something that they can study without the teachers', and teacher 05 said 'as a teacher I find it better if students try to work with me rather than sit and wait till I explain the lesson'. Teachers mostly explained that they do not mind providing help for students generally and particularly when students ask for help in order to work on a lesson before it is explained by the teacher, as teacher 10 explained:

> Yes, if students ask for help, for example they do not understand
> something, I help without any problem. Actually I find these
> students who are active and do not worry about asking about things

and ask me for help to try to work on lessons better than students who do not ask and who want me to explain and do everything.

When asked why she prefers students who are active and who ask for help, this teacher answered:

> Because this can help lessen the burden on me as a teacher. I can't teach everything. Also when students learn by themselves in class and not wait until I do all the things I can know if they understood or not because when I discuss with them or ask one student to explain something then I know if that student understood or not (T. 10).

Other teachers expressed their ways of helping students either when students ask for help or when they see that students are not progressing in tasks or activities. For example, teacher 15 noted that:

> When students ask me for help or so, I feel happy and I provide them with help according to what they need but not always. For example, if a student doesn't know what is required from a task or how to do an activity, I explain and show how it is to be done.

Teacher 03 explained it as follows:

> If any student wants help, of course I help by showing the student what to do and how to do it. For me, this is very good and I feel happy with students who ask for how to work on the tasks but actually not all of them ask for help.

Such teachers' inclinations and acts towards helping their students to work independently show that they tend to allow and prefer students to take on learning by themselves rather than insisting they depend on them.

Generally teachers expressed positive opinions towards helping their learners to do activities and tasks and discussing the lessons with them. Some of these teachers however noted that they do not always help their learners according to these learners'

questions, queries or preferences for how to work. They pointed out that this is mainly because not all students prefer this type of work and some of them prefer the teachers to explain the lesson and guide them in how to work.

An important theme in helping learners is facilitating to them taking control of their learning. Again, this differs from helping students in that it refers to the teachers' provision of appropriate environment and facilitating to learners being active without them even asking for it, which means that teachers holding such beliefs are more inclined to relinquish authoritative roles and involve learners in learning.

4.2.2.1.1.2 **Facilitating independence**

Related to the previous theme is the teachers facilitating independence for their students. Teachers mostly showed that they favour a classroom atmosphere that allows learners to take a share in learning and students who are aware of the importance of working on their learning rather than depending completely on teachers. For example, teacher 03 stated:

> I prefer and like the students to be active and show interest in the lesson and work on lessons not only sit and listen to me speaking all the time. Students who work on their learning by themselves either in class or at home are usually much better and they are more open to talking in the class and explaining and doing presentations and asking questions and so on. That is why I prefer active students and try to adapt the class to this atmosphere because usually their level is better.

Teachers showed a number of procedures through which they facilitate to their students adopting autonomous roles in their learning. These differ from one teacher to another depending, it seemed, on the teachers' mode of teaching as well as on the learners' readiness to take an active role in learning. Teacher 07 noted that she provides chances to learners to work on their own before she explains or works on the lesson herself: 'if we have workshops I let them choose the topic or what the workshop will be about or give them my materials before and they work on it at

home, then the choice is theirs'. Teacher 14 pointed out that she makes her students work as follows:

> I always focus on activities to work in groups or in pairs, so I give them chance just to discuss, maybe ten minutes or so with each other and then we discuss it together, as a whole class. I then ask every group to have one volunteer, they should decide who will speak.

This teacher justified facilitating to her students to work in groups rather than individually because: 'If they work individually, they just have to focus on themselves, but in groups they will have chance to talk, take some ideas from each other. I think they are so happy when I say work in groups' (T 14). Another teacher explained how a teacher can provide chances for learners to be active and work on their learning and cease to depend on teachers:

> It is much better that students learn on their own because the teacher can't follow the students all the time, he can only show them the way to look for information themselves, how to look or search, to understand, how they can explain, how they can prepare for some things. So it is only a kind of clarifying some things by the teacher for the students to go on the same way, or they might have another way (T 06).

In general, teachers were mostly in favour of creating an atmosphere that allows their learners to take control of their learning. Also, most of them expressed their preference for students who are active and take the opportunities to work on their learning.

However, not all teachers said that they create for their students the atmosphere to be responsible for their learning. They attributed this to the time available in lessons which they said was insufficient for allowing learners to work autonomously or allowing all learners to perform different activities in class, as well as the necessity of covering all the material prescribed by the Education Secretariat. In addition, one teacher noted that not all students want to work autonomously: 'Some students

usually want me to explain the lesson for them, ... They need someone to help them and explain it to them so I have to do it' (T 08). Teachers' accounts of not allowing learners to be active and their perceptions of this issue are presented in the following part.

4.2.2.1.2 Monopolising control

This part presents the views of some teachers who preferred to not allow and not facilitate their students' autonomous learning. There were not a lot of teachers who noted that they prefer to dominate the classes and explain lessons. Teacher 15 noted:

> I usually explain the lesson and make students follow what I ask
> them to do, not what they usually want to do. This is because not all
> of the students can work on lessons by themselves and also because
> that will take much of class time and this is a problem for me.

Monopolising control of lessons seemed to take place in class whereas outside class some teachers, surprisingly, appeared to encourage their learners to work autonomously. One teacher said:

> Most of the time, I ask students to prepare the lesson at home and
> then I explain it in the class. I can't let students work as they like
> actually because they will take a lot of time, and may not
> understand the lesson well or understand it wrong. Also some
> students will be very noisy if I let them work together so I have to
> explain the lesson to them (T 09).

Teacher 04 explained how she behaves with her students in the class and why she normally does not allow students the opportunity to work autonomously as follows:

> In some times when I feel the lesson is difficult or will take a long
> time I make students silent and listen to me. I make them
> concentrate and I explain the lesson to them. I can't give much of
> class time to them to work by themselves because then I will not
> finish the book. But I make them work at home. I give them

homework and ask them to prepare the lesson before we take it so they know the topic and the new words and the lesson becomes easy for them.

As can be seen, it is not necessarily the case that teachers do not allow their students to work autonomously in class because they are not in favour of students being responsible for their learning. Often other constraints are involved, such as the insufficient time or necessity for the teacher to provide explanations and lead work in class. This refers to teachers' acceptance and approval of allowing learners chances to work independently of them, but such constraints as mentioned in the examples above make it an inappropriate choice in their classes for them. One teacher explained it as follows:

I can't always allow students to work alone and can't help them to work alone very much because I have to cover the book before exams. For me, I know it is good for their learning to work on their lessons and learn alone and with some help from me but it takes a lot of time and this is a problem really (T 15).

It was also demonstrated by some teachers that not only do they not facilitate learners being autonomous, but they also seem to constrain learners from taking responsibility for their learning. This is explained and exemplified in the following part.

4.2.2.1.3 Dominating classes

In this part, I present some teachers' opinions about controlling their classes and not allowing the space for their learners to be active. Some teachers, though not many of them, demonstrated that they find the idea of allowing their learners to be independent unacceptable. These teachers noted that learners would not be able to progress in their learning on their own. Teacher 11 noted: 'Learners can't do a lot of their learning without the teachers. They sometimes have to depend on the teacher especially inside the classroom because the teacher knows more and knows how and what they should learn'; and teacher 09 stated: 'I think it is not easy for students to learn without their teachers, they need teachers to explain to them, to show what is important and how to study and so on'. Teacher 13 also adopted a similar attitude:

'For me, learners must work with teachers. Teachers have to tell students how to learn because they can't learn by themselves'. When this teacher was asked why she thinks learners cannot work on their learning independently of teachers, she noted:

> Because they are used to depend on their teachers from primary
> school and they don't want to work hard, they want the teachers to
> tell them everything and explain everything. They don't want to
> work hard, at least most of the students (T 13).

However, such teachers noted that with help from teachers, learners may adopt roles in which they become active and play an effective part in their learning. For example, teacher 04 added that:

> If we want to make students learn by themselves, we have to help
> them. They can't do that without the teachers' help and supervision.
> After we teach them how to study maybe they will be able to
> depend on themselves and study without teachers.

Teachers who seemed to oppose the idea of allowing learners to be responsible for their learning and pointed out that learners have to learn under the auspices of teachers were very few and they stated that with teachers adopting roles of helpers and guide, learners might develop the ability to be active and not solely depend on their teachers.

Now I turn to how teachers perceive their students and what they think about their practices in terms of being active, following orders unquestionably, whether they are autonomous or rely on instruction and whether they are able to express preferences or not.

4.2.2.2 Teachers' perceptions of their students

This part presents how the teachers perceive their students in relation to being autonomous. This is not through addressing the term autonomy directly to the interviewees but through other concepts that underlie taking control of learning by students such as activeness and independence of students. As usual, teachers' views

of their students vary considerably. I take this variation as completely normal as teachers employ different modes of teaching and have different approaches to teaching and beliefs about how students should act. This account presents these teachers' perceptions in categories pertaining to whether or not students are active or inactive, obedient or disobedient, independent or dependent, and whether students are extrovert or introvert in learning, which might facilitate their taking active and autonomous stances in their learning.

4.2.2.2.1 Active/ Inactive

Mostly, teachers pointed out that their students tend to be active, especially in situations where these students are offered opportunities to be active in the classroom. Teacher 12, for example, noted: 'My students, not all of them, usually want to work and show that they want to be active and not just sitting down in their desks'; teacher 08 stated: 'In most classes, students try to work hard and be active and work with me on lessons. They don't like class when I explain the lesson and they are inactive and only watch and listen to me'; teacher 06 noted that her students are 'so active and they feel happy to use the projector and how to present the lesson and they are so active, all of them'; teacher 01 pointed out that what makes students active or passive is their level: 'This [being passive or active students] depends on the level of the students,...good students ... are active', and teacher 02 stated that her students are usually 'active and work more than the teacher, especially about the new words, the new things'.

However, some other teachers showed that their students follow the way the teachers lead the class and work according to the way these teachers urge them. That is, when teachers ask students and encourage them to be active and effective in learning, students become active and work hard. Likewise, when teachers ask their students to be quiet and teachers lead the class, students then become quiet and only listen and are minimally active. Teacher 05 illustrated this as:

> I think I can make my students active or not in the class. It is better
> if students are active and my students want to be active but I can't
> let them all the time because they sometimes become noisy and

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some lessons they can't learn by themselves. So, I sometimes allow
them to work alone or with each other and with me and sometimes I
explain the lesson and they listen.

This teacher's comment shows that although students are capable of working actively, they seem to demonstrate activeness and initiative toward such work only when the teacher allows them. This, though it may not be a sign of passiveness on the part of the students, does not necessarily mean that students are inclined to take the initiative in this teacher's lessons. In addition, it shows the importance of teachers' role for determining the students' mode of learning.

Another teacher stated that students are usually passive and inactive and wait for her to explain the lesson and to direct them how to do exercises and work on activities and tasks:

Students are mostly quiet and sit and wait till I explain and tell them
what to do. They depend on me very much, maybe because the
subject is difficult or my way of teaching (T 11).

Mostly, teachers explained that their students are generally inclined to be active and to work hard in classes and demonstrated that when students are granted opportunities to work actively on their lessons and independently of teachers, they try to seize these opportunities. This suggests that learners themselves are inclined to be active as has been expressed by them earlier. The teachers' views have shown that their students are active in classrooms, but the teachers' adoption of ways of teaching that encourage these students to exercise their desired activeness differs. Some teachers seemed to grant learners more space and greater chances to be actively involved in their learning, while others seemed to constrain their learners' aspirations to be active in their learning. Moreover, the teachers' influence on students seemed to have extended to making students retreat from taking active roles in lessons as suggested by the extract from teacher 05 above.

Another theme that might clarify how teachers perceive their students in this regard is students being obedient or disobedient to their teachers.

4.2.2.2.2 Obedient/ Disobedient

This category emerged from teachers expressing whether their students are obedient or sometimes disobedient. The aim of presenting this category is that it shows how teachers perceive their students in terms of following teachers' orders or trying to suggest or maybe force their own ways in learning. Teachers referred to their students as obedient most of the time. They referred to them taking what teachers tell them seriously about activities inside the classroom as well as about tasks outside the class such as doing homework. For example, teacher 05 stated this as:

> Students usually do what I ask them to do. Usually I don't treat
> them formally. I ask them to do something such as homework but I
> say it to them in a quiet and friendly way and I tell them if they
> have something which is not clear, they can ask me any time. So
> they don't say no or so.

Also, teacher 09 explained: 'When I tell my students to work on an activity or so, they usually do as I tell them. They only sometimes ask me to change the activity when they don't like it or so.' This obedience perhaps reflects that teachers are mostly considered authorities whom learners consider unchallengeable. However, teachers referred to incidents where students seemed to be disobedient to them. Teacher 13 explained that students' disobedience is not demonstrated publicly by students:

> Some students don't do what I ask them to do such as preparing
> lessons at home. They come without preparing the new words or
> knowing what the lesson is about. They don't care a lot for what I
> say to them. I know this but they don't show it clearly, I mean they
> don't say that they will not prepare lessons or will not do the
> homework.

That students do not show their rejection to teachers' orders publicly, that is in front of the teacher and other students, may be interpreted as an attempt to keep teachers' face by such students. Teacher 13, who pointed out that students do not express their disagreement with teachers' orders in front of her and other students, explained:

I am not sure. I cannot tell you exactly why. Maybe they don't do homework or prepare lessons or so because they cannot do it by themselves as they sometimes tell me. So I am not sure why but maybe because some teachers do not like students to disagree with them. I remember this when I was a student; some teachers don't accept students' disagreement with them or when students don't do what these teachers ask them (T 13).

Students' disobedience to teachers can be a sign of disrespect and may refer to teachers' losing their face (Nguyen, 2012), that keeping face has been referred to in literature as one sign of respect for teachers and considering them authorities (Nguyen, 2012). However, none of the participants touched on this issue and in particular none of the teachers who pointed out that they preferred not to allow learners to be active referred to not doing so because of the possibility of losing face. A few teachers stated that when they allow learners chances to work independently and actively, students make noise and may not consider the teachers' presence.

Generally, teachers demonstrated that their students are obedient but also showed in other categories that students are active, hardworking, take a share in learning and tend to work independently of them. This obedience therefore should not be considered a sign of teachers' dominance of classes or a sign of students' retreating from adopting responsibility for their learning. It could be attributed to certain students having a preference for this type of teaching or the nature of some teachers' teaching modes.

Another theme that emerged in teachers' conceptions of their students is them being independent of or dependent on the teachers.

4.2.2.2.3 Independent/ Dependent

This theme presents the teachers' perceptions of their students' dependence or independence. That is, how teachers look at their students in this regard, whether they consider students to depend on them or whether they tend to work on their learning without reliance on teachers.

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Some teachers referred to their students as independent, being able to work on their own and proceed with learning when left with no or little help from teachers, although these participants did acknowledge the teacher's position as a helper and guide. Teacher 10 described her students as follows:

> I think my students are independent although in class they usually do what I ask them but not always, and even if they do what I tell them they also ask me to let them work alone and with each other and when I let them work they become active and work hard. So I think they are independent and can depend on themselves to learn when they don't have teachers to help them.

Another teacher (T 06) noted: 'We try to do a lot of work ... and students, some of the students even write research or essays, a long one and we work in this together'; teacher 01 linked students' inclination to being autonomous to their level and attitude towards learning: 'this [students working by themselves] depends on the students. Students who want to improve their language like this way, to work by themselves'; also teacher 02 pointed out that:

> students who are careful and study, they love it and always ask me to do group works and told me that this strategy is very good because they improve their writing by this way and they know each others' ideas about the topics or something like that, you know they share each others' ideas.

Teachers' conceptions of students being autonomous were qualified by the fact that they do depend on teachers in situations where they are unable to proceed without help or guidance. In such cases, teachers showed that students normally resort to teachers' help and direction. For example, teacher 08 explained:

> They [students] sometimes work by themselves, but they need help from time to time and they ask me for help when they need. I help but I usually try to make them try to work before I help them, but not always as this takes a lot of time.

Teacher 04 pointed out 'Students ask for help because they can't do everything by themselves and this is the role of the teacher to help them and show them how to study, how to do tasks and so on'.

Teachers generally stated that their students are inclined to work independently especially when offered opportunities by their teachers. However, this independence is usually supported by interventions from teachers either when students ask for this help and guidance or when teachers decide to interfere when they see that students are stumbling in their work individually or in groups. Teacher 04 said: 'Sometimes students ask me to help them by showing what to do or how to do something and sometimes I help them when they take a lot of time and don't finish the work'.

A few other teachers, however, referred to students being dependent on them and unable to work independently, as teacher 13 explained:

> Students need the teacher to explain to them. They depend on my explanation, they can't always work alone. For example, when I give them homework, sometimes they don't do it all and they say that they couldn't do it. Also, in class they usually need me to explain the lesson, but not all of them because some students get bored when I explain everything and they don't work.

This teacher's comment about her students refers more to students' seeking help than an inclination to depend on her.

Another theme that accompanied students being active and autonomous is being open to discussion and asking their teachers, and working with colleagues or being shy and distancing themselves and avoiding contact with teachers and other students. Students' behaviour in this sense is presented in the next theme as being extrovert or introvert.

4.2.2.2.4 Extrovert/ Introvert

Alongside the previous three categories that emerged during teachers' descriptions of their students is whether students are extrovert or introvert. Being extrovert is used

here to refer to students who have the aptitude and readiness to indulge in work and activities with the teacher or other students, whereas being introvert refers to the opposite type of students.

Teachers' views about this theme varied from one teacher to another as well as from student to student. That is, some teachers referred to their students as extrovert and other teachers referred to them as introvert. Teacher 10 stated: 'Students are generally open, welcome starting and doing activities when I ask them and they sometimes ask for that. Usually, they are not shy or hesitant, not all of them but most of them'; and teacher 05 pointed out:

> I see they are free to state their opinions or so especially if I ask them, but also sometimes when I don't ask for their opinions. They become happy and work hard when I let them work together or discuss with them the lesson. When we discuss the lesson or tasks together, they speak without problems, they don't get shy or so. I can say they are outgoing.

Teachers who described their students as inclined to being independent, disobedient and active tended to refer to these students as extrovert, while teachers who considered students as dependent and inactive described their students as introvert. Therefore, it seems that being introvert is a characteristic that is absent in those inclined to independence and who favour autonomous behaviour in their learning. However, teachers' modes of teaching and the nature of the different subjects might have an influence on the students' behaviour. Teacher 11 thinks that her students are introvert and inactive because of the difficulty they have with the subject she teaches, where students cannot work on their own. She stated:

> I think they are not very much open and some of them are shy and not active maybe because the subject is difficult and they can't study it by themselves, so they need me to explain it to them and help them understand it.

Another teacher noted that when some students are shy to ask in front of other students, they ask her for help outside the class: 'when I go out of the class, you can

find one or two of them follow me and say that they don't understand the lesson, can you just repeat it or something like this, so I do this' (T 06). Therefore, students' sense of shyness and being introvert may not be a result of teachers' influence on them or opening spaces for them to be active and extrovert, rather it seems to be a personal characteristic of such students about which teachers probably cannot do much.

In the next part, I present the teachers' conceptions of good learning and teaching in relation to allowing learners to be active and working on learning.

4.2.2.3 Teachers' perceptions of good language learning and teaching

This part presents the teachers' opinions of what they think is effective and good language learning and teaching. This is intended to present their perceptions of the ways and methods they think are appropriate for effective teaching, as well as what modes of learning they think students should follow in order to maintain good language learning. This is in order to show whether these teachers are satisfied with their own and their students' performance, i.e. whether they think they teach effectively or not, whether they are satisfied with their students' performance, and above all what they think of the value of allowing learners opportunities to work actively on their learning. The teachers' perceptions of good learning is related in this analysis to learners' influence and roles in the classroom. This is both because learners are an important party in the learning-teaching process, and because effective teaching perhaps cannot be employed without effective students.

I start here by presenting an account of how the teachers perceive good learning, and how they think learning should be undertaken.

4.2.2.3.1 Teachers' perceptions of good learning

Good language learning here is used to refer to what constitutes the teachers' accounts of good learners' behaviours and characteristics. In particular, it relates to whether teachers perceive good learners to be autonomous or not and whether good learning is teacher-directed or student-centred. This particularly relates to students since learning is performed by them, however it is used here to present the teachers'

accounts of what good language learners do and how they learn in relation to teachers and what teachers' roles are in this. Therefore, it relates to their perceptions of how learners react to the teaching activities, what teachers' think their learners should do and how they should learn efficiently.

Some teachers pointed out that they think learners are the primary actors in this process, believing that learners make learning effective and that teachers only have a secondary role. Teacher 07 stated: 'Learners should be concerned about their learning and then the teacher helps them and encourages them and so because you can't force students to learn'. Teacher 03 said:

> If the students don't want to learn for any reason I can't make them
> learn and I can't teach in a good way. If they are bored from the
> lesson or from my way or so, I can change it or change my way of
> teaching but if they don't want to learn then it will be very difficult
> for me.

Other teachers, however, stated that they think teachers have the main responsibility for making learners learn effectively and for creating an appropriate atmosphere for their students to learn. They provided different accounts of this. For example, teacher 11 stated: 'Normally learners are used to get help from the teachers and that teachers show them how to learn, how to do activities, how to study and so on. The students usually can't do that without the teacher'. Also, teacher 09 explained her view as follows:

> The teacher's role is very important for helping learners learn. They
> can't learn well without the teacher. The teacher can tell them how
> to study, explain difficult things. Sometimes they can't understand
> things by themselves and sometimes they don't want to learn by
> themselves, even when they want to learn they sometimes can't
> learn alone, and they need teachers' help. So the teacher makes
> students learn and work on their learning by helping them, giving
> them advice of ways of learning.

These discrepant views of teachers towards who should be mainly responsible for effective learning are normal in that teachers hold different beliefs about learning and about their students as well as different beliefs about their own ways of teaching. However, most teachers demonstrated beliefs that good learning is learner generated as much as teacher assisted.

In the next part, I present the teachers' conceptions about good teaching and their roles in it, i.e. teaching that they think is effective and that helps learners understand, and which leads to good learning.

4.2.2.3.2 Teachers' perceptions of good teaching

This part presents the teachers' representations of good language teaching, how they think teachers can teach effectively, and what they think they should do to their learners in order for teaching to be effective and help learners benefit the most.

The teachers interviewed presented two main accounts in this regard. A number of teachers noted that they think that teaching that is, for the most part, guided and performed by the teacher is more effective and efficient and is better for learners who, in these teachers' opinions, are unable to perform learning or at least to learn well without teachers' guidance or control. Teacher 13 stated: 'For me, teaching that is done by the teacher is better for learners and teachers because students can't learn without the teacher'; and teacher 12 explained:

> I think it depends on what students themselves like, whether they like the teacher to explain for them and so or they like to learn by themselves. For me, I think it is the teachers' role to do some things like explain, make students work and so which makes students study and understand. Students alone can't learn, they need the teacher to explain, repeat for them and help them and so but they have to work also.

Other teachers adopted a different perspective. They stated that teachers' help is usually necessary for learners but the students can and should be given chances to

learn autonomously in order for learning to be effective. Teacher 08 noted the following:

> Teachers can help learners learn and guide them and so on but they shouldn't be the controllers of learning in the class. Learners should be helped to learn by themselves because they will not always find help from teachers or someone else. So I think if learners learn by themselves it is better for their learning.

Teacher 05 adopted a similar view:

> The best learning is when learners learn, and not receive this knowledge from teachers' explanation and so on, because when learners take part in their learning they will learn better and more easily and what is more important is that they learn how to study and learn without teachers' explanation and control because students don't always have teachers to teach them.

This teacher explained why she thinks some teachers try to control the lesson and perform all teaching by themselves rather than offer chances to learners to work on their learning as follows:

> Some teachers don't know about different ways of teaching, so they just do as their teachers did. They think that teaching is only about explaining to students and making them learn vocabulary and doing homework; therefore, they don't allow learners to be active, do any activities, discuss things in the class, give their opinions and so on. I think if they know how to deal with students in modern ways of teaching, they will change their teaching and the ways they treat their students (T 05).

The teachers' accounts of good language teaching illustrate how teaching is generally perceived by teachers in the context of this study. Some of them presented conceptions of good teaching as domination of classes and explaining everything to students who sit down and listen. This perhaps refers to the lack of awareness of

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some teachers of modern teaching methods and may also be an indication that these teachers see students taking responsibility for and autonomy in learning as unacceptable. However, other teachers conceived good language teaching as involving relinquishing control of classes and allowing learners to be active partners in learning through granting them responsibility and control of their learning. This in turn can be seen as a reference to the fact that teachers consider such autonomous practices as eligible and appropriate as well as necessary and more feasible in teaching and learning in this context. However, almost all teachers noted that their help to students is necessary for learning to be efficient and for learners to benefit the most.

After inspecting the teachers' views and perceptions of their roles and students' roles, their perceptions of effective learning and teaching and of learning and teaching in general, in the following part I present their understanding and perceptions of autonomy and of learners' being autonomous.

4.2.2.4 Teachers' understanding of autonomy

This part presents teachers' interpretations of the concept 'autonomy': what they understand by it, and what they think their roles and their students' roles are in an autonomous classroom. It should be noted here that I tried to avoid using the term autonomy itself during the interviews and instead used terms such as 'allowing learners to take control of learning', 'being responsible', 'independent' and 'active', because the term autonomy itself might be unfamiliar to teachers. Therefore, I explained these terms and tried not to limit the concept in any terms and explained to teachers what is meant by it.

Teachers had different interpretations and understanding of allowing their students to be autonomous, as well as different perceived roles for themselves and for their students in being autonomous. Mostly, teachers showed that they hold positive attitudes towards allowing learners responsibility and giving them a share in their learning. Some teachers noted that being autonomous and students taking a share in learning is the students' right and is a more efficient way to learn. Teacher 10

commented on the importance of learners taking some independence from teachers as follows:

> For me, it is very important and it is very good that learners are active and are responsible for their learning. They become more active and take learning more seriously so they do their part effectively and not only depend on the teachers.

Teacher 04 put it as:

> Students must be independent of teachers, at least in some things, not always or in everything but in some things or parts of learning they must do it by themselves. I think this way they will understand more and be more interested in learning.

Some of the teachers pointed out that being autonomous means allowing learners to behave according to their needs or desires in learning. For example, teacher 06 stated her opinion of allowing learners' independence as: 'They should do this, actually they don't need to depend on the teachers... because especially language, they need to work alone, they need to work individually, they need to look for information, they need to collect vocabulary'; and to be independent, she encourages them to 'read books, read stories, try to check or access the internet, look for new information, if they don't find the word meaning, they can check this in the internet' (T 06).

In a number of cases the teachers' interpretation of autonomy was through illustrating their own roles and their students' roles. Teacher 10 said:

> To be independent means students can answer questions without the teacher making them answer, I mean they can speak in the class when the teacher doesn't ask them to speak, like a student raises her hand and speaks to the teacher. Also, when they can learn without the teacher doing everything in the class, that is the teacher doesn't explain to them everything but they try to learn by themselves without the teacher telling them the answer.

Most teachers noted that learners being responsible for their learning means teachers partly work with learners and help them, and agreed on the importance of their roles in encouraging and helping learners to be responsible for their learning. Teacher 13 explained:

> One of the teachers' duties is to help learners and to encourage them to work hard and not make them always depend on their teachers, because teachers will not have time for everything in the material and students will not always find teachers to explain to them.

Teacher 03 also explained a similar view:

> As a teacher, I should help my students. This is my role. Help is not by explaining only, but teachers should make students able to study by themselves, they can help them and encourage them do that at least step by step.

And teacher 15 stressed the importance of teachers to learners' autonomy as follows: 'The students can't be independent if teachers don't make them or help them or let them be independent because teachers control the class and if they don't help students, then students can't become independent of them'. In this, teachers also noted the importance of teachers allowing learners to act autonomously in classes, and creating the atmosphere that caters for students' needs. Teacher 12 stated: 'Of course, the teacher is very important in the classroom, not to explain and to show students and so on but to help and encourage them to learn without her, and maybe to teach them to learn without her'. This teacher answered why she thinks the teacher is very important in the classroom since she thinks that learners' independence means working without the teacher. She answered:

> Because if the teacher speaks a lot and doesn't let students speak or doesn't listen to what they say or ask, then students will not be able to learn by themselves, independently, also, because the teacher must help students and encourage them when they can't do things by themselves (T 12).

Also, teacher 03 stated that for students to work independently of teachers:

> Teachers should help learners if they want their students to be able
> to learn by themselves and not depend on their teachers because if
> the teacher does everything then students will not ask teachers to let
> them learn by themselves because it is easier for them to let
> teachers explain the lessons. But if the teacher makes students
> active and encourage them to depend on themselves to learn then
> they start to depend on themselves; of course they cannot forget
> about the teachers and work by themselves completely, they need
> help and so on from teachers like make things clear and explain
> difficult things and check their work and so on.

A few other teachers held a different view; that is, for students to be responsible it is primarily the learners' responsibility, however without denying the importance of the teacher's role. For example, teacher 12 stated:

> The students must work hard and work by themselves and become
> independent of teachers. If they don't want to become independent,
> then no one can make them independent or work by themselves.
> You can't force them to work by themselves if they don't want and
> they want to depend on the teachers' explanation and so on, but the
> teacher must help the students.

These views show the teachers' awareness of learners taking responsibility for and being autonomous in their learning. Teachers' interpretations differed and they demonstrated that they understand by student autonomy that these students should be able to take a lead in their learning under the guidance and help from teachers. These interpretations also took the form of sharing the control of lessons between teachers and their learners, rather than either denying the learners' right or ability to be responsible for their learning or offering complete independence to learners. That is, teachers still held themselves responsible to share a part of the responsibility in some aspects of the lessons on the one hand and helping learners to be responsible for their

learning on the other. Furthermore, complete independence did not seem to be a prominent aspect of their understanding of learner autonomy.

It is apparent that teachers generally tend to prefer students being independent and becoming able to take responsibility for their learning. These attitudes of teachers not only signal them being in favour of allowing learners to be responsible but also show that teachers are mostly aware of their roles as facilitators for learners to take autonomous roles in their learning rather than to rely on teachers. However, about whether they conceive any cultural influences on their allowing students active roles and autonomy in learning, teacher 01 explained as follows:

> I think at secondary school, students need to depend to some extent
> on teachers but later in college it is ok if they depend on themselves
> where students will be able to depend more on themselves. That is
> why I think in the Libyan culture, the teacher should do everything.
> Students' levels sometimes make them depend on teachers.

Therefore, it is not completely rejected for this teacher, but the age and level of students decide whether they have to or can be autonomous in their learning.

In this part, I presented the teachers' understanding of autonomy and what perceptions they hold towards allowing learners to have active and autonomous roles in learning. Their interpretations of autonomy are sometimes presented through direct explanation of their understanding of the concept and sometimes through outlining their own and their students' roles in learning.

4.2.2.5 Summary

In this section, I responded to the first research question. I presented the participants' perceptions about their roles and each others' roles, their perceptions of good learning and teaching and their perceptions of autonomous learning. Participants' perceptions and interpretations of their roles and each others' roles differed from one participant to another.

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Students mostly perceived their roles as active and autonomous agents in their learning. For example, learners preferred working in groups, collaborating, giving presentations, explaining lessons and preparing lessons. They perceived such roles to be more appropriate for them in learning which lead to more understanding and more motivation. Such students also perceived their teachers' roles to facilitate learning for them, share with them work on lessons, allow them opportunities and encourage them to work autonomously on their learning, be friendly to them, and not treat them in a discriminatory way. These students perceived autonomous learning as more appropriate to them which they stated leads to more feasible learning and more motivation. However, there were some students who perceived their roles as reticent, passive learners. They noted that they should depend on teachers to whom they have referred as knowledgeable. Generally, students demonstrated high degree of awareness of their roles and preferences, even those who were inclined to depend on teachers should be perceived as aware of their preferences. Therefore, they could be referred to as autonomous in that they expressed their preferences in learning without being obliged or forced to adopt such roles.

The second part of this section presented the teachers' perceptions of their roles and their learners' roles, their perceptions of good learning and teaching and of autonomous learning. Teachers' perceptions and interpretations of their roles mostly referred to helping learners and facilitating for them taking opportunities to be active and responsible. Such teachers perceived good students to be active, extrovert and responsible for their learning, and their interpretations of good learning and teaching showed that they prefer learning and teaching where learners work with teachers and are held part of responsibility for their learning. Such teachers perceived autonomous learning as more appropriate, more feasible and learners should be allowed opportunities to learn autonomously. On the other hand, there were a few teachers who held a different view. These perceived their roles as authorities who should lead the learning-teaching process, and perceived students' roles as passive. They stated that learning which is teacher-directed is more appropriate.

Relating these findings to Oxford's (2003) model, it can be seen that in its technical perspective, the participants expressed their preference for an environment that offers

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them space to teach and learn according to their preferred modes. These included, for example, the layout of seats, and the learning and teaching aids they described as important for their teaching and learning. Regarding the psychological perspective, the participants mostly exhibited cognitive awareness of the importance of learners being allowed opportunities to be responsible for their learning and teachers allowing learners to take control of learning. They showed that they can play different roles in this such as giving presentations and working on lessons at home for students, and being facilitators of autonomy to learners and working as helpers for teachers. In the socio-cultural perspectives I and II, the participants showed great appreciation and preference to a teaching-learning atmosphere that allows collaboration and working together. For example, one of the most preferred types of work for students was group work. This was more favoured to working individually and in pairs. In the political-critical perspective, the participants showed that power is distributed in the classroom between teachers and learners. In this, teachers were sometimes considered powerful, knowledgeable figures in the classroom; however, learners were permitted to play roles where teachers relinquish their authoritative roles and become partners in learning. Indeed, the atmosphere where both teachers and learners were co-partners was the most preferred for the majority of them.

In the following section, I present the participants' practices in relation to how they learn and teach and how they build their relationship with each other. This is approached from the perspective of learner autonomy, i.e. which party is normally the more active and controlling in learning and teaching. These practices are presented through delineating the participants' relationship with each other, their modes of learning and teaching enacted in transmission, scaffolding and handing over control to learners. After that, I present examples of autonomy-supportive practices from the context and conclude by presenting constraints that showed to influence the participants' modes of teaching and learning.

4.3 Participants' practices

4.3.1 Introduction

This section is concerned with presenting the participants' practices in teaching and learning, the nature of their relationships with each other, how teachers behave with their students in the classroom, and how students behave and react to teachers' modes of teaching. It presents whether and how teachers provide learners with opportunities to learn by themselves, how some teachers do not allow their students to work on their own, as well as how students behave according to their teachers' provision or withholding opportunities to work autonomously. Since the concern is about how teachers and learners teach and learn and establish their relationship, the examination of the classroom communication is directed towards expressing the nature of this relationship in regard to learner autonomy. Therefore, this section responds to the second set of the research questions.

From the observations, themes can be arranged under three main categories that tended to vary in degree and form. These mainly cover—as they relate to this study's focus—the teachers' and students' practice regarding who principally act as dominator of lessons, how this is done, and whether and how they interact and negotiate lessons and share control. These themes are sequenced according to the degree of teachers' control of lessons and learners' involvement in learning. However, firstly I preface this section with a discussion of the nature of the relationship between teachers and learners and learners with each other. This is meant to provide a picture of who acts as the main figure in the classroom and whether students are being active or not, as well as to examine how teachers open horizons for their students to act responsibly in their learning.

The second part of this section presents examples of teachers tending to be controlling in lessons. The classroom mode of learning and teaching presented in this part is imprinted with the transmission of knowledge from teachers to learners; that is, teachers do not provide students with opportunities to take control of learning and students themselves seem to not wish or are unable to take control. Therefore, this

part provides extracts from observations where learners are dependent on their teachers in learning. In this, I try to fathom the conditions that have given rise to this situation. This is then followed by a part to illustrate scaffolding where teachers provide help for learners to take control of their learning and to learn autonomously. This sort of aid provided by teachers to students is presented in different forms and to different degrees depending on various factors such as the teachers' personality and mode of teaching, the learners' own readiness to work independently, the materials used and the length of classes, which are discussed in 4.3.4. After this, I discuss the phase where teachers, after providing help and guidance to students, gradually withdraw their aid and allow learners to work more independently. This handing over of control to learners has been observed through different strategies that teachers employed to adapt students to be in control of their learning.

None of these themes might be generalised to all the classes as different teachers follow different modes of teaching, different students tend to favour different teachers, and there is a number of factors that proved to have considerable influence on teachers' and learners' practices in teaching and learning. These are discussed in part 4.3.4.

In this part as in other parts of my presentation of data, I try to provide as much of an emic perspective as possible in order to maintain a thick description. However, this is not always maintainable, especially when dealing with data obtained from observations. Therefore, as the different analyses are linked to each other, issues in observation data might be validated through interview data. In this, I find it beneficial to outline the context where the observations took place. There were 33 students. The classes took place mainly in two classrooms, one of these had seats arranged in rows and were fixed to the ground and could not be moved around, while in the other classroom the students could arrange the seats according to their own or the teacher's preference. There were always posters which the students prepared and attached on the walls and they changed these with newer ones almost every class. In addition to these two classrooms, in a few occasions the students moved to a language laboratory equipped with listening aids which, however, students rarely used.

I start here by briefly presenting a description of teachers' and learners' relationships and what lies behind creating each sort of relationship.

4.3.2 Teachers' and learners' relationships

This part presents the nature of the relationship between the participants. It is meant to introduce the next parts and to outline the way that participants interact and deal with each other in their teaching and learning.

During observations in classrooms, the corridor and other places in the institute, the general impression is that students mostly assume a friendly relationship with their teachers. This is not to be generalised to all teachers and students, and there are a few teachers who enforce a rather formal relationship with students and seem to rarely allow students to interact with them outside classes. These teachers seem to do so because they think their cooperation and extreme friendliness with students causes them to become noisy and they perhaps do not show reverence to teachers as one teacher stated: 'I know students, if one lets them ask and talk about anything they want especially outside the classroom, they will think the teacher is naive and they will laugh at her' (T. 09). Actually, a few teachers tended to not be friendly with students particularly outside the classroom, in corridors, in the teachers' room and so on as expressed in interviews and exhibited during observations. Unsurprisingly, those teachers who tend to be formal with students outside the classroom do not do so only outside the classrooms but also during lessons. These teachers tend to be in control of lessons during classes following the depository model of teaching where the teacher does everything while students are quiet listeners, and outside classrooms they normally do not allow students to ask or enquire about issues either related to study or to other matters.

Now I present the three emergent categories of modes of teaching and learning and the participants' relationships with each other. The first part presents how some teachers follow the transmission mode of teaching with their students where they restrict control of classes and explanations of lessons to themselves, and force students to take a passive stance in their classes.

4.3.2.1 Transmission

This theme has emerged from observing teachers controlling their students' activities and steering the way the lesson progresses. Classrooms are characterised by teachers' management and by rote learning and an almost complete absence of negotiation, and students adopt passive roles. Learning is de-contextualised, and teachers control question and answer exchanges where they nominate the students to answer who normally provide reproduced, predetermined answers (Webster, et al., 1996). Students therefore are not offered opportunities to learn by themselves, and for this reason this theme has been identified being highly related to the investigation of this study. It takes different forms depending on various teachers' modes of teaching as well as on factors that seem to affect ways of teaching and dealing with students. This theme is presented in categories in order to detail the practices that demonstrate the methods teachers follow in their behaviour with their students as well as the students' own behaviour.

I present here examples of practices from classroom observations where teachers control lessons and perform the teaching while students are mostly passive and rarely interfere or show activeness. Incidents where teachers control lessons seemed to be exclusive to certain classes in a number of teachers' modes of teaching. During such classroom observations, I noticed that some teachers dominate the classes and seem to not let students be autonomous or take part in learning. These teachers usually explain lessons in a traditional manner where they stand in front of the class and explain to students who listen to and follow the teacher. At the end of the lesson, the students are usually assigned homework, which seems to be used to consolidate as well as test the students' understanding of the lessons, as one teacher noted at the end of one lesson after assigning homework to students: 'This homework will help you see if you understood the lesson and understand it more. I will check next class to see if you did it correctly' (T 12).

The teachers' domination of lessons differed in forms and degrees. This ranged from totally controlling lessons by suppressing students from expressing what they would like to do in the lesson, to neglecting their suggestions and opinions, to discouraging students from being active or stating their preferences. In total domination of classes,

teachers suppress students and do not allow them to state their views. Those acts that designate the classroom as a transmission classroom are presented as follows.

4.3.2.1.1 Classroom control

As was observed in classrooms, when teachers made the lessons one sided-talk, with just the teachers themselves talking, students seemed to be bored and uninterested in the lesson, which led to classes being less lively. This fact was also expressed by most students in interviews. The following extract from one lesson shows how the teacher's pressure on students prevented them from being interested and lively in their learning:

> T 15: Now you have to do homework. It is clear how to do it, answer the questions.
>
> S1: Can you explain to me how I answer it teacher?
>
> T 15: You will know if you read it at home.
>
> S2: When do we have to prepare it teacher?
>
> T 15: Next lesson, you have to do it by next lesson. There will be some marks and it will not be good for those who don't do it.
>
> S2: We have a lot of homework teacher.
>
> S3: Other homework and a test too. Can we take more time teacher?
>
> T 15: No, you have to prepare it by next lesson. It is next week and you have enough time.

At this point, several students other than those who asked the teacher to help them with the homework were evidently unsatisfied with the teacher's setting homework and forcing them to prepare it by next lesson. The teacher's rejection of the students' requests seemed to dissuade other students to state their requests or suggestions, and they only showed their dissatisfaction in their facial expressions and by whispering to each other.

In another lesson, as she entered the classroom, the teacher asked the students to be silent and focus on her explaining and on the board. The following note is taken from observing this teacher's lesson.

> The teacher stood in front of the class, wrote on the board and played the tape and asked students to answer, students raised their hands and the teacher pointed to one student to answer. The teacher repeated the activity with several students answering at once, the teacher knocked on the table and asked them to keep quiet. At the end while one of the students was reading from the book, other students were talking to each other. The class finished, the teacher said to students 'see you next lesson' and left the class (T 08).

The teacher was in control of the lesson, not wanting students to speak, interrupt or ask without her permission. The teacher also seemed to not offer an atmosphere that would allow students to ask questions or behave conveniently during the lesson. The students, in addition to their views in interviews expressing disinterest and disagreement with such modes of learning, seemed unhappy and oppressed during observations of this and similar lessons where they lacked opportunities to be active in lessons.

In another example the teacher also controlled the classroom and directed the students in how to work and learn. This time the teacher also showed some harshness with students and did not allow opportunities for them to discuss the answers to her questions or even ask for help with some of the answers.

> The teacher asked one question and elicited the answer from the students. She told students not to answer randomly and to raise their hands. A number of students raised their hands to answer. The teacher pointed to one student to answer so the student stood up and started to answer. The teacher interrupted her and asked who else could answer. This time, the teacher herself decided who to answer, the student she chose couldn't answer, she stood up silently. The teacher asked her to answer, then whether she knew the answer or

not, the student stood silently. The teacher pointed to another student to answer, the student stood up and started to answer. The teacher interrupted the student to correct some mistakes. When the student finished, the teacher asked her to sit down, without praising or thanking her. The teacher now started to answer the question neglecting some students who raised their hands to answer. A few students were talking to each other so the teacher shouted at them and asked them to keep quiet. Most students sat quietly listening to the teacher. When she finished answering the question, she asked if that was clear, and the students were dead calm. She told them that if anyone did not understand, they could ask, and then she moved to another page (T 13).

The teacher was apparently not friendly enough with the students to create an appropriate atmosphere for them to act in a way that they would prefer. They were sitting down mostly in silence; the teacher's formality clearly formed a barrier between her and the students. For example, the teacher did not allow students to answer voluntarily, but rather she chose the student who would answer disregarding whether the student was prepared or showed willingness to answer or not. Also, when one student tried to answer but seemed to answer incorrectly the teacher did not provide any praise or encouragement. The teacher first stood still listening to the student's answer, then she interrupted her and moved to another student. This affected the student's sense of participation, as was shown clearly in her expression. In addition, when this student started to answer and made some mistakes, the teacher treated these mistakes as problems that the student should not have made and by interrupting her and correcting these mistakes the student was embarrassed and apparently unwilling to continue to answer.

This behaviour from the teacher apparently made the students inactive and they withdrew from participating actively because the teacher did not provide an atmosphere that allowed for such activeness. Rather, the teacher steered the activities according to her own management of the class, probably because of certain constraints that influenced her, such as the length of classes and material.

In the previous extracts it is clear that these teachers followed a mode of teaching where they were the authoritative figures in the classroom and students were passive, reticent listeners. This mode of teaching tends to be attributed to traditional methods of teaching, and it is unsurprising that students show some resistance to it and are more likely to accept modes of teaching and learning where they are active and involved in their learning. This can be seen in the scaffolding and handing-over sections in this chapter, as well as in their interview responses. However, that teachers do not consider their students' desires to work on their learning as they wish and that they control classes is justifiable for them for different reasons (These are discussed in part 4.3.4).

Another aspect through which students were deprived of opportunities to be active agents in their learning was the teachers' disregard of the students initiating conversations, giving suggestions and voicing their opinions, as I present in the following part.

4.3.2.1.2 Ignoring students' initiative

One of the ways in which teachers suppress students from being active learners in classrooms is their disregard of students' initiation of conversations, interruption of or asking teachers to allow them to work according to the ways they prefer. Ignoring students' initiatives may not only allow teachers to maintain control of the class, but also lead to students withdrawing from taking part in lessons, sometimes even when they are invited or offered the opportunity. The following extract shows how the teacher disregarded one of the students' suggestions, and how it apparently led to the student feeling disappointed and withdrawing from being involved in active work:

> As the teacher walked in, she asked the students to be quiet. She asked a few questions about the previous lessons and in each question she assigned one student to answer. Then she opened the book and wrote the title of the lesson on the board. One of the students raised her hand: 'Excuse me Miss'. The teacher looked at the student and listened to her. The student told the teacher that she had prepared the lesson at home, asked the teacher to allow her to

explain it and that she would be happy if the teacher allowed her to explain. The teacher started to turn pages in her book without looking at the student. The student added that in other lessons they explained lessons and they found it useful and they understood the lessons. The teacher remained busy with her book without paying attention to what the student was saying. The student's facial expressions showed she was not happy with her teacher and opened her book (T 15).

The teacher's disregard of the student's request stressed her control of the atmosphere of the class and made the students unwilling to take part, and instead to only follow the mode that the teacher enforced on them, that is making the students passive and doing the explanation and other work by herself.

Also, in teacher 04's lesson, the following extract shows how the teacher did not care about one of the students' suggestions to allow them to do presentations:

S: Teacher, please let us do presentation so we prepare it at home and make it in the class.

The teacher started explaining the lesson, did not care about the student and ignored her suggestion which apparently caused disappointment to the student.

The student's suggestion shows her inclination to work actively in the class but the teacher ignored her suggestion, and it was apparent that this led her to keep quiet.

In a different teacher's lesson, one student asked the teacher to defer the exam date, but the teacher disregarded that student. When another student asked the same thing, the teacher said that she could not and that she had to follow the time-table for exams. This exchange was as follows:

The teacher had told the students about the exam in a previous lesson. One student asked the teacher: 'Teacher, please can you make it in another day?' The teacher did not pay attention to this

student's request. The teacher was discussing something with another student near her at the front desk. Another student asked the teacher to defer the exam to another day. The teacher now turned to that student and said 'I can't. You know there is a time table for the exams and you have to take it on that day. Don't ask me for this again'. The student looked unhappy and had to accept it and apparently didn't have anything to do about that (T 08).

Although the teacher did not have the authority to postpone the exam according to the students' convenience, her neglect of the first student and the way she replied to the second student imply that she does not allow them to state their suggestions and if students did, she would not or could not take them into consideration.

Such examples of teachers ignoring students' initiative or suggestions seemed to backfire significantly in terms of encouraging students; that is, rather than being taken into consideration and discussed with the students, they are neglected and suppressed. This results in deflating students' desire to work actively in their lessons.

A close issue that was evident in some classes was the lack of teachers' encouragement to their students, as well as discouraging students from being active and monopolising the control of classes. This is what I present in the next part.

4.3.2.1.3 Discouraging students' contributions

Under this category, I present cases where teachers not only neglect students' initiatives, suggestions or opinions, but also react in a way that discourages students from taking further such actions. Although not a lot of teachers behave in this way, some of them, for example order students not to interrupt them or offer suggestions or opinions about a lesson or a way of dealing with activities, and so on. Therefore, teachers who exhibit such behaviour towards their students can be considered authoritative and controlling.

Incidents of teachers discouraging students' initiatives seemed to strongly discourage students from voicing their opinions and how they wish to learn. This not only seemed to cause students to not state their opinions to the teacher, but also to

withdraw from following the teacher's invitation to answer questions, read, or follow the teacher; therefore, resulting in a classroom atmosphere that is controlled by the teacher.

The following extract from one classroom observation exposes the effect that the teacher disregarding students' initiatives, opinions or suggestions can have on their participation and activeness in the class:

> The teacher entered the classroom, greeted students who replied to the teacher's salutation. The teacher asked a question about the previous lesson, the students raised their hands and the teacher asked particular students to answer. The teacher asked one student to answer her question, so the student stood up and started to answer the question. The exchange was as follows:
>
> T: Yes [Pointing to the student to answer]
>
> S: He lived in Tunisia and he was a scientist and studied the stars and used telescopes
>
> T: [With snigger] Did they have telescopes at that time?
>
> S: [Hesitantly] He watched stars.
>
> T: Any other answer? [Inviting other students to answer].
>
> The teacher looked unsatisfied with the answer so she interrupted the student and asked the class if anyone could answer. That student seemed very disappointed and sat down. The rest of the class also seemed hesitant to answer, which could be because of the teacher denying the student's attempt to negotiate and to comment conveniently on her answer (T 07).

In this case, when the student realised her answer was not correct, she sat down and was unhappy with the teacher's reaction, whispering with a wry mouth to her colleague sitting next to her. The rest of the students sat down quietly. They seemed

hesitant to take the initiative to answer, even though they might have known the answer. Therefore, the teacher's reaction to the student and lack of encouragement resulted in the student retreating and becoming disappointed. This also affected the rest of the students who withdrew from taking part with the teacher by being reluctant to answer the question. In such lessons where teachers seemed to not favour allowing learners to take a share in learning and tended to explain lessons by themselves, students were clearly unsatisfied and uninterested in lessons, especially when such lessons were compared with lessons where students were allowed to collaborate with each other and to work with teachers. Such behaviours when teachers discourage students from being active were recurrent in a number of lessons, but not by many teachers. That is, teachers such as those mentioned above were not common but incidents where students were not granted the space to be active were recurrent in such teachers' lessons.

Nonetheless, it was observed in some lessons that students exhibit some challenge to teachers' dominations of lessons. Sometimes students state their preferred ways of learning or their discontent with the teacher's mode of teaching. The following extract is an example from one lesson:

> The teacher was explaining and making students listen without allowing them to participate or work. The students generally seemed unhappy. One of the students said to the teacher: 'Excuse me teacher, can we work together or explain? I don't understand very well because I get lazy when I sit down and listen'. At this point, the teacher asked the whole class: 'Do you want to work and explain and work together?' A good number of the students said: 'Yes, yes teacher'. The teacher asked again: 'Those who want to work and explain, raise your hands'. More than two thirds of the students raised their hands. The teacher said: 'I will see because there are other things you don't know. In some classes I will try to let you work together and explain lessons' (T 10).

Even lessons that were characterised by teachers' control and students' inactiveness were not entirely devoid of teacher-student and student-student interactions and

students working independently and collaboratively. Though these were minimal in most such lessons, they mostly seemed to be affected by constraints other than teachers' disfavour for allowing learners the opportunities for negotiation and taking initiatives, such as lack of time in lessons and there being a lot of material to go through.

4.3.2.1.4 Summary

In this section I have presented the participants' behaviours and practices and their relationships to each other. The examples quoted above and some similar incidents have been shown to affect students' behaviour and their ways of dealing with teachers. In lessons that are traditional and with teachers who are restrictive, students apparently tended to withdraw from taking part in learning. This is because teachers often do not consider their students' suggestions on how they would like to work. What is more is that when students take the initiatives to suggest to one teacher a certain type of work the teacher disregards the student's suggestions, or when the teacher asks a question and one student provides incorrect answers, the teacher behaves discouragingly with the student or rebukes the student's attempt. Such behaviour from teachers results in students becoming disinterested in the lessons and withdrawing from participating. It seemed that students are affected by such teachers' way of controlling lessons, and their understanding of learning refers to performing what their teachers require them to do or say. These behaviours and the relationship created between teachers and learners mimic what Freire (2005) terms the 'banking concept of education', that is education with a 'narrative character', and transfer of knowledge from teachers to students that lack creativity. In such behaviour, as seen in this section, the teacher is the depositor filling the containers, the students, with knowledge that is not permitted to be criticised or questioned (Freire, 2005, pp.71-72). In this, teachers consider students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge and see their roles as purveyors of knowledge who control the what, who and why of learning (Webster et al., 1996, p. 39). Therefore, in such situations: 'The teacher works hard, carefully defining what pupils must do, directing them step-by-step, but leaving little to the initiative or ingenuity of the learners' (Webster et al., 1996, p. 39).

The teacher's responses to students can be important in determining students' views towards them. That the student is 'being denied that shared warmth can be extremely traumatising' (Restak, 1991, p. 134), resulting in students withdrawing from being active and therefore surrendering to teachers' authority. This makes the students' activeness and readiness to partake contingent on teachers' offerings and willingness to provide the appropriate atmosphere. However, such practices of teachers were not prevalent in many classrooms; they were recurrent in only a few teachers' lessons. Moreover, students construed these classes as lacking interest and liveliness and therefore they showed clear signs of boredom and disagreement with such teachers' modes of teaching. On the other hand, the teachers' responses can lead to students' 'presence being confirmed, love asserted, connectedness and communication reaffirmed' (Restak, 1991, p 134), which results in students internalising the feeling of being welcomed by the teacher and providing the atmosphere where they can behave according to their preferences. Examples for this from classroom observations are provided in the remainder of this chapter.

In the following part, I present how teachers help students by offering opportunities and adapting the atmosphere for them to take more responsibility for and participate more actively in their learning.

4.3.2.2 Scaffolding

In this part I present how teachers help learners to take part in their learning and to adopt more active roles in their learning rather than suppressing students' aspirations to be active and restricting control of the class to themselves. In this, the concept of scaffolding—or discovery learning where students are permitted to work on their learning with little or no help (Mayer, 2004, p. 14)—is relevant to the analysis for two reasons: firstly, because of its relevance to aiding learners to work autonomously and actively; and secondly, because such practices, which underpin teachers assisting students to work autonomously were recurrent during observations.

I start by clarifying the term scaffolding, which refers to 'the complex set of interactions through which adults guide and promote children's thinking' (Edwards et al., 1987, p. 151). The concept is grounded in Vygotsky's developmental theories

(Breed, Hawkins and Roller, 1991). In line with ZPD, scaffolding involves assistance from the more capable, such as the teacher, to the less knowledgeable e.g. students and the withdrawal of this assistance gradually so students can start to accomplish tasks autonomously. Breed et al., (1991) see that independence must be achieved through daily interactions between students and teachers, and scaffolding is a powerful tool to achieve this goal. The characteristic feature of scaffolding is that it is not employed to simplify a task but to facilitate the learners' role (Breed et al., 1991).

As it relates to the analysis in this study, this category emerged because of its connection to facilitating learners to adopt autonomous roles and preparing them to be responsible for their own learning, and also because of widely recurrent activities during observations that involve teachers working as initiators of activities, facilitators and providers of help. Therefore, this part presents the teachers' and learners' behaviours in regard to teachers' provision of help and their support for learners to work autonomously. It is noteworthy here that scaffolding comes in different degrees and forms and is not limited to particular activities or procedures or to certain levels of learners (Kermani and Brenner, 2000). In this sense, Mayer (2004) makes a distinction between pure discovery methods, where the student is provided with little or no help from the teacher, and guided discovery methods, where the teacher provides guidance, clues, modelling and aids to the students. Mayer (2004) quotes a study by Shulman and Keisler (1966) which concludes that guided discovery is more effective than pure discovery for enhancing learning. Therefore, because students are not always able to learn through pure discovery, Mayer (2004) notes that an amount of help is necessary to help students construct learning. The control that the teachers surrender to students is not linear and moves backwards and forwards (Lucantonio, 2011). Therefore, it is normal that teachers' control differs in its degree and form, as will be evident from the analysis here.

In the lessons I observed, teachers sometimes provided extensive aid to students, which can distort the process of allowing them to work their way through learning and construct answers by themselves. That is, teachers sometimes set students tasks or activities but they interfered either too quickly or too extensively in a way that

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strips the task of its benefit and distorts the process of scaffolding. This undermines the expected benefit, which is setting students on the track and aiding them to gradually take on learning by themselves. An example of this is how a teacher interferes before students have the chance to accomplish the task independently. This is illustrated in the following extract:

> The teacher presented the activity to the students and asked them to work in groups. After about ten or fifteen minutes, the teacher said that was enough and asked if any group was ready to raise the card. Then two students from one group stood up and practised the activity, followed by two students from each of the other groups. It seemed that students still needed time to work (T 06).

The teacher's request to students to form groups can be considered a form of allowing them to work according to how they would like as the majority of students preferred this type of work. The teacher's invitation for someone who knew the answer rather than assigning a certain student to answer her question showed that she behaved leniently with students and that she did not force them to follow certain instructions. However, the teacher seemed to interfere too early when she limited the time allowed for them to work on the task. Therefore, her interference apparently prevented students from taking their time to work on the task according to their desired modes. She started to explain the answer herself and this seemed to bring to an end the teacher's support for students to work independently of her. Therefore, the teacher seemed to have interrupted the scaffolding she had started with her students. Nonetheless, she did not take maximum control of the activity and allowed further interference from students.

One way that teachers scaffold learners to enable them to adopt more responsible roles is through cueing students' contributions. This refers to setting students on track in order to adopt more autonomous roles through which they become less dependent on their teachers. These contributions are:

> least influenced by teacher control. But they were not devoid of it. It was the teacher who had set the agenda, defined the topic of

discussion, and established in advance the criteria of relevance and appropriateness of any contributions that the pupils might offer (Edwards et al., 1987, p. 131).

In such situations, teachers usually introduce a point, help learners to start working on the activity, and provide help which facilitates the work for the students. This help depends mainly on the level of students and the difficulty of the task. That is, the lower the level of the students and the more difficult the task, the more extensive the teacher's help would be. This justifies the varying degrees and forms that scaffolding takes. For the purpose of clarity and showing how the teachers provide scaffolding, I present here extracts from some lessons.

An example of one teacher cueing students to work with her and providing them with hints and prompts to be involved is the following extract from one classroom observation. The teacher prompts students to be involved in the activity and encourages them to take part in the discussion and to exchange opinions with her and with each other. It is good to notice here the teacher's friendly manner in trying to encourage students to take part in the discussion.

> After the students finished working on an activity in groups, the teacher raised a question. She elicited the answer from the students, she asked if any of the students could answer her question. She allowed students to look back at the books. One of the students started to speak to the teacher: 'I think the problem is in the people themselves'. The teacher asked: 'How? What do you mean that the problem is in the people themselves?' The student: 'I mean people are not sure what they want or what they do because they are not used to this [freedom]'. Teacher: 'Do you mean they were not free before?' The student: 'I think they are freer now, they think they can do anything'. Teacher: 'Maybe you are right.' The teacher encourages other students to comment: 'What do you think?' Talking to the whole class: 'Do you think people think they can do anything?' Another student comments on this: 'Not all people, some people know they can't do some things'. The teacher

interrupts: 'Such as?' The student takes the turn again: 'For example, taking weapons on the streets'. The teacher: 'Aha, I think you are right' (T 03).

First, it should be pointed out that the teacher's tone in asking the questions showed that she urges the students to talk, and her facial expressions showed that she was calm and behaved informally. Her question was open to students' opinions rather than seeking a certain answer from the book. The teacher elicited students' responses and their comments through encouraging them to speak by providing cues, without which students might not be ready to talk. The teacher elicited students' answers rather than simply interfering to correct them or stop them and allowed chances for students to explain and elaborate. When the student from the above extract stated her opinion as 'I think the problem is in the people themselves', rather than taking the answer as a final opinion, the teacher opened more space for the student to elaborate further. This made the exchange more authentic rather than a mere initiation by the teacher and a response from the students. Later in the exchange, the teacher moved the focus from the first student by directing the question to the whole class. She tried to include different students in the activity. When one student took the initiative and spoke, the teacher again seemed to engage in an informal way with the student rather than a formal class exchange. The students, even though there was not a lot of discussion, seemed to be involved in the discussion and interaction with each other and the teacher. Their reactions to the teacher's help show that they do not prefer it when the teacher explains while they are passive and simply follow the teacher's orders.

Scaffolding was also evident in some teachers' preparations for students to give presentations during classes. In some classes, teachers asked students to prepare a topic in groups and to present it to the class. These presentations were given by groups of five or six students in each presentation. The teachers' role was to explain to students how to present their work in front of the class. They rarely advised on the content, though there was some criticism of some of these presentations. However, criticism was presented in a friendly and informal manner so that it did not, as it seemed, negatively affect the students' preparedness and eagerness to work in this

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way. In one lesson the teacher guided the students on how to do presentations. She told the students what they normally need to include in a presentation, how they should manage time, how to remain confident and how to organise and present their ideas. In that lesson, none of the students gave a presentation, but the teacher asked who would like to present in the next lesson. The teacher and groups of students scheduled dates for each group to present. In the first presentation the students gave, this teacher's guidance was evident and there was a degree of controlling their behaviour of how to give the presentation as well as its content. An extract from this lesson is as follows:

> When about twenty minutes remained in the lesson, the teacher asked the group to present if they were ready. The students said that they were ready and they said they might have some mistakes with their presentation, the teacher reassured them that this would not be a problem and to just present what they prepared. The students moved in front of the class. The teacher told them to stand aside and when one of them wanted to present she should stand in front of the class, she also reminded them to present their parts each in the time they had and try not to take longer. The first student started to present the topic, the teacher interfered asking for clarification of why they chose this topic, the student answered and continued presenting, followed by the second presenter who seemed to have taken longer than she should so the teacher interrupted her and drew her attention to the time left and asked her to give her colleagues a chance. The students presenting were mostly confident and relaxed. The teacher was observing students but there was interference from her from time to time. After they finished, the teacher thanked the presenters and asked them to ask the class if they had any questions. There were a number of questions from the class, the presenting students answered, and the teacher was mostly interfering to build on students' answers. When there were only about three minutes left, the teacher interrupted and asked the students to return to their seats. She provided some advice to

students, she noted to them that they should not make the topic too wide and to make it focused, to manage the time and not to take too long, to interact with the audience when presenting, and to try to practise before they present in front of the class. Last, the teacher asked which group would present next lesson so one group of the students stated they would (T 09).

In this extract, the teacher's control of her students' schedule was clear. She told them what to do in a presentation, what to include in it, how to do it, and so on. However, this was a form of guidance and teaching them how to prepare and give a presentation, so it cannot be considered hindering their independent work or innovation. Rather, students may practise their independent work to a high level in spite of the teacher's intervention during and after the presentation. The teacher's interference was for the purpose of teaching students how to work without her help and to depend on themselves. This can be seen to extend to other activities and tasks rather than to those presentations alone. In the next extract the teacher's interference becomes even more minimal. The following extract from a later lesson by the same teacher demonstrates the teacher's behaviour in granting more autonomy and adopting a less authoritative role; that is, withdrawing scaffolding gradually:

After about twenty minutes of the lesson, the teacher asked those students—supposed to present in that lesson— if they were ready to present their work. The students stated that they were ready. The group of students to do the presentation came in front of the class, one of them introduced the topic of the presentation. Each of them took turns to present parts of the presentation. The teacher and the students were listening without interference. After they finished, the teacher gave some comments on a few things she said were not covered. Her comments were quite friendly and presented as advice and suggestions. The teacher then asked the class if they had any questions to ask to the presenters. The teacher and some students asked their questions. These were answered by different presenter

students rather than one student of the presenters. The teacher at the
end thanked the presenters and they returned to their seats (T 09).

In this, the teacher's role was a guiding and a facilitating one. In an earlier lesson, she showed students the steps for preparing and giving presentations. While giving the presentation, the students were allowed to work almost entirely independently. The teacher was in the audience with the other students. Her interference was mostly after the students had finished presenting. During the students' presentations, the teacher interrupted them a few times to remark on the direction of the presentations, whereas after they finished the presentations she provided some advice on points the students seemed to have not covered properly. This can be considered facilitation and cooperation rather than a form of control.

In a number of other lessons, the teachers' role was to help learners and to prepare them for working independently of teachers. This, as stated earlier, took different forms and varied in degrees from one class to another and from one teacher to another. The teachers' scaffolding on a number of occasions was observed to be provided less extensively and withdrawn gradually. For example, in an earlier class from which the previous extract was taken, the teacher provided more extensive guidance and advice to students, and it provided more focused and richer guidance than was the case in the extract just presented. In the course of transitioning from scaffolding learners to handing over control to them, teachers or adults must consider being contingent enough to determine the pace and amount of help they provide to learners, 'holding back when enough of the task has been grasped to allow room for initiative' (Webster et al., 1996, p. 44). Contingency, which is one component of scaffolding, refers to determining the best time to provide assistance without being too obtrusive or managerial, and it is 'arguably the most important quality for teachers to have in enabling children to take control of their own learning' (Webster et al., 1996, p. 151). Interfering too quickly or too extensively can undermine the purpose of the process of scaffolding and may lead to students maintaining their dependence on teachers. In many of the observed instances of teachers scaffolding students, the teachers' support was withdrawn gradually through less intervention from the teachers. For example, in one of the lessons

> The teacher asked the students to work on an activity in groups. Students were already sitting in groups, they started to work together and the teacher was preparing something in the book. After about five minutes, the teacher started to move around students checking their work. Then she started to speak loudly and telling students what to do for the activity. The students were listening to her and working on the activity (T 04).

The teacher's intervention was too early and deprived the students of the chance to progress on the task without her aid. This instance shows how the teacher lacked contingency and how she seemed to ruin the process of scaffolding.

With these practices that some teachers follow with their students, they prepare their students and provide them with opportunities to take on learning by themselves; that is, they prepare students in order to hand over learning to them. This hand-over does not mean leaving students to work entirely independently without teachers' facilitation, but the help and aid that teachers provide is considerably minimised as learners gradually become accustomed to less dependence on teachers and more dependence on themselves.

Scaffolded instruction pioneers the way for handing over control to students. This transfer is referred to by Edwards et al., (1987, p. 158) as involving 'a gradual handover of control from teacher to learner, as the learner becomes able to do alone what could previously be done only with help'. However, mostly teachers still provide help to learners, although this is often minimal. The following part deals with the practices where teachers prepare students to take on more active roles by handing over more control of learning to students. Webster et al., (1996) note that scaffolding refers to more than help provided to learners by teachers. The difference I envisage here lies in that help provided to learners refers to enabling them to perform an activity or task at the time of providing help, whereas scaffolding means providing students with strategies to gradually tackle their learning on their own without outside help.

In the next part I turn to the stage that comes after scaffolding learning, which is passing control to learners to perform genuinely independently of teachers. This stage perhaps forms a challenge to learners concerning whether they are able to seize the opportunity and liberate themselves from teachers or whether they still insist on being mere receivers of knowledge.

4.3.2.3 Handing over

This phase can be considered an extension of scaffolding rather than a completely separate one. This is because learners move forward and backward between these stages, as well as because scaffolding supports learners towards the stage where they are able to take control over learning (Webster et al., 1996, p. 70).

By handing over, I mean that learners are handed over control of their learning to govern the task or activity without the teacher's exhaustive intervention. Therefore, in this process, 'learners do not remain for ever propped by the scaffolding of adult assistance, but come to take control of the process for themselves' (Edwards et al., 1987, p. 23). It is significant here to note that what is handed over is not information but 'procedures and strategies leading to independence in the learner' (Webster et al., 1996, p. 141). The teachers' role is particularly important for adapting the atmosphere for learners and enabling them to take over control of their learning. The teacher therefore becomes a facilitator for learners to take control rather than a controller. Moreover, the teacher mostly withdraws leaving more space for learners to work independently. However, it is not an aspiration for the teacher or the students to hand over total control to students; rather, the teachers' role ranges from doing most of the work themselves to propelling students to take the initiative, to supervising the learners in how they work. Learners are now in the position where they themselves can be active in their learning and can learn independently of the teacher. Nonetheless, the situation at the stage of handing over is not so extreme that learners learn completely independently of teachers, rather learners have started to take responsibility more extensively for their learning but without teachers being completely absent. The teachers' role has become less apparent and their facilitation has retreated considerably, giving space to learners to take more responsible stances

in their learning. Examples from observations which exhibit such handing over of control to learners are now provided to consolidate this presentation of these situations.

In one lesson, one teacher set the students activities to do in groups and worked as a supervisor and helper who provided aid when students asked or when she noticed students were not progressing well with the activity. Her intervention was not spontaneous but was mostly in response to students' requests to help them. When she provided help, this seemed to be minimal and then she retreated from helping and students continued working independently.

> The teacher started by asking a few questions about the previous lesson. Then she presented the lesson which the students had apparently prepared before they came to class. The teacher presented an outline of the lesson very briefly, then she asked the students to work on their own in groups. The students have already been sitting in groups of five or six. They started to discuss the lesson in groups and share ideas without the teacher's intervention until one student from one group asked the teacher for some help. The teacher joined that group and started to explain to that student what she asked about. The teacher then retreated, leaving the students working on their own. The students remained working independently of the teacher for the rest of the lesson. From time to time, the teacher interrupted the students offering help and telling students to ask if they had any questions. Throughout the lesson, the students were busy working with each other mainly in groups and sometimes working with other groups. Still, when their voices became higher, the teacher asked them to work in their groups and lower their voices for less noise. For most of the lesson, students worked completely independently of the teacher. The teacher only interfered minimally when students asked for clarification or help to which the teacher responded immediately and then retreated. At the last ten minutes or so of the lesson, the teacher interrupted the

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> students asking if they had any questions or if there was anything
> that was not clear. The teacher also indulged in short conversations
> with the students about the topic. When the bell rang, the teacher
> interrupted one student who was talking, praised the class and
> asked them to prepare another part of the lesson to be discussed
> next class' (T 14).

In this example, the teacher's role was minimal and her facilitation was considerably less than in other classes. In this lesson, she worked on making students work collaboratively and autonomously. The students clearly benefited from this and followed what seemed to be their preferred way of working on their lesson because none of them stopped working or seemed to be passive. Rather, they were enthusiastic and involved themselves in working together and discussing the lesson. Also, none of them expressed to the teacher or to me during or after the class finished that they did not prefer that type of working. Therefore, because they were interacting comfortably and freely with the teacher, they signalled their contentment with the way the teacher allowed them to work, as well as their ability to work independently of her.

In another example, students were asked to prepare lessons to present in classes. These presentations were in the beginning guided by the teachers, and the teachers' interference before, during and after the presentation was considerable. At a later stage, it was observed that the teacher's guidance to students on how to do a presentation and what to include in it and so on had decreased significantly. The students started to choose the topic, consulting the teacher about it, preparing it at home and presenting it in the class, with teachers providing only minimal help and guidance. Usually the presentation was not allotted all the time of the lesson but only part of it. In the presentation at this stage, the teacher's interference was minimal and the students were in control. The teacher stood watching and listening near the rest of the students. An example of this was in one of the lessons observations as follow:

> The teacher prepared a pen and the whiteboard for the students who
> were going to present. Five students stood in front of the other
> students and the first one started to present reading from a paper for

few minutes, then the second one also presented from a piece of paper, the third one did the same, then the fourth student, while the rest of the class were listening. The last student concluded the presentation. The teacher asked the students if they had anything to add. One student added a few sentences. Then the teacher thanked the students and they walked to their seats' (T 10).

What is note-worthy here is that in previous presentations the teacher used to guide the presenters in much of their work before, during and after the presentation. Gradually, the teacher's guidance and supervision was withdrawn and the students were allowed more freedom to work more independently and with more responsibility for their learning.

In this category also lie situations where students showed the ability to start and develop discussions without being explicitly encouraged by teachers, such as providing suggestions for how to do a task and to perform a particular activity in a certain way. This has emerged both from students' inclinations to work independently of teachers and from teachers' preparation of students to take responsibility for their learning through gradually handing over control to them. Examples from classroom observations for students initiating discussions and working independently of teachers include asking teachers to allow them to work independently, to present work in class, to form groups to discuss the lessons, and expressing their discontent to teachers when these teachers seem to control the class and do not allow the students opportunities to work. For example, teacher 02 used to present and explain the lesson by herself while students used to follow with few interruptions during the lesson, however it was evident that they were unhappy with this way of presenting the lesson. In one of this teacher's lessons:

> While the teacher was preparing to give the lesson, a number of students asked the teacher to allow them to discuss the lesson with each other, to do presentations or discuss it with the teacher herself. The teacher succumbed to the students' calls—though persisted with that lesson explaining it by herself—and promised the students

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to allow them to form groups and work on their lessons in the next
classes (T 02).

Following these calls by the students, the mode of this teacher's lessons changed considerably in later lessons. Students were allowed to prepare and give presentations and discuss lessons together and with the teacher. However, this teacher, as well as a number of other teachers, kept raising the problem of insufficient time.

These practices of teachers placing learners in the role of responsible agents for their learning show how teachers provide their learners with opportunities to handle learning independently and demonstrate the learners' own preparedness and aptitude to take responsibility for their learning. However, autonomy does not mean that teachers relinquish control and learners work completely independently of teachers (e.g. Little, 1990). Rather, autonomy with its variability in forms and degrees, allows for learners and teachers to cooperate in order for learners to be active and autonomous and for learning to be effective.

In the next part of this section, I present an aspect from the participants' relationships relating to autonomy-supportive and autonomy-constraining practices. I look at what I have observed in the classrooms against such practices from the literature.

4.3.3 Teacher-student relationships: Autonomy support and constraint

This part looks at autonomy supportive and autonomy constraining practices from the literature that were observed in the context of this study. The list here cannot be exhaustive because of the variety of forms of autonomy support that teachers might adopt (These practices are detailed in 2.5.2). This might take the form of comparing the situation in the context of the study with the literature, however this is not to claim that an autonomy supportive environment must meet certain criteria otherwise it will be deemed autonomy-constraining. Rather, it is meant to present a view of the situation in the context of this study, this is supported by the participants' views. This is both because autonomy is a multivariate concept taking different forms and degrees (Benson, 2011; Jiménez Raya, et al., 2007; Lamb, 2005); and because it involves creating an appropriate learning environment (Dam, 1995). The review of

these practices is used here to form a part of the framework for looking at the qualities of the participants' behaviours and practices in this study.

A principal component of autonomy support is the provision by the teacher of an autonomy-friendly environment where the learner can be an active agent performing learning according to his or her preferences rather than those dictated by the teacher. While there is no ready-made recipe for autonomy (Benson, 2003; Dam, 1995), the literature is laden with different activities and procedures that teachers might use to foster and cultivate autonomy amongst their learners. Now, I present instances from observations that provide evidence of autonomy-supporting practices in the teacher-learner relationship and their teaching and learning. These are followed by a part looking at the constraints that might be considered to affect the participants' ways of learning and teaching.

A principal procedure amongst these methods is listening to learners' voices and opinions and taking these seriously. If these are neglected and if teachers solely follow their beliefs and ways of teaching without considering their students' needs and wants, it will very probably lead to a sense of control in the relationship between them resulting in a 'banking model' style of teaching (Freire, 2005). During observations, I noticed that there were considerable differences between teachers' ways of dealing with their students. Some teachers almost entirely deprived their students of the chance to state what they consider to be appropriate for their learning while others clearly allowed students to make suggestions and took them into consideration. For example, in one class of teacher 05's classes, the students raised the same request and the teacher provided support to what the students asked; that is, to allow them to do presentations in her classes though the teacher pointed out to the students that they have to work hard on these:

> After the lesson almost finished, the teacher was asking a few questions and asking if students had any questions to ask. One student asked the teacher that they would like to do presentations in class. The student said: 'When we do presentations we prepare the lesson at home and in class we discuss so we understand it better'; another student added: 'Yes, teacher, and it is more interesting too.'

Most of the other students showed agreement with these two students. The teacher asked the whole class about their opinions of doing presentations and discussing the lesson together. The majority of students were enthusiastic and said they preferred that. The teacher told the class that they would have to work hard on presentations and needed to be active in class if they chose to work that way. A few students seemed to retreat; still the teacher noted that they would discuss the matter next class (T 05).

In later classes of this teacher, the students started to do presentations with guidance from the teacher. After the teacher agreed to the students' suggestion of doing presentations and discussing the lesson together in class, the students' behaviour changed markedly into them being active and preparing their presentations at home and taking part in discussions in the classroom. After one lesson, I asked the teacher what she thought about that, she replied: 'I just consider what students think is good for them. For me it is good that the students are active and work rather than listen to me explain and show them everything' (T 05).

It was also observed that some teachers allowed learners to discover for themselves and to discuss the answers to their questions. In one of the lessons, this was one student's request from the teacher. As the teacher answered one question before students had time to think about the answer, that student raised her hand and said:

Excuse me teacher, we can't answer very quickly so give us some time to try to answer before you do. As a reply to this, the teacher welcomed the student's request and indeed went on to allow some time for students to try to answer either individually or by discussing the answer together (T 08).

In regard to issuing directives to learners, in some teachers' lessons it was noticeably recurrent that teachers direct students by ordering them to follow them or to work in a certain manner. Some teachers seemed to issue orders to students which seemed to make students feel obliged to follow them and not have the chance to reject or negotiate them. However, this was almost entirely absent in other teachers'

lessons. Some teachers, although they issue orders to students, do so in a way that allows learners to not reject these orders per se, but to deliberate on them or at least ask for more explanation from the teacher, more time to prepare homework or presentations or defer an exam and so on. Opposite to issuing orders and directives to students is the teachers asking students what they want to do or how they want to do it. This is seen in the literature to enhance autonomy but was minimally observed in lessons. Even those teachers who asked students what they wanted to do did not ask directly and did not give space for students to decide matters especially regarding what these students wanted to study, i.e. the content. Asking what students wanted to do by teachers was mostly and almost only about whether students wanted to do presentations, when they preferred to take an exam and sometimes about the topic of presentations as topics of those presentations were mostly from the course books.

Another technique that is suggested in the literature as autonomy-supportive is responding to questions generated by students. Although it seems to be taken for granted that teachers answer their students' questions, whether the teacher allows students to ask or not and the way the teacher responds to these questions is a crucial determinant for and a sign of the nature of the relationship between the teacher and students. This can help create a friendly and relaxing environment for students during the lesson, which probably positively affects their learning. In all classes it was normal that one student raised her hand and asked the teacher a question, but the students' willingness to interrupt the teacher and the teacher's reaction to this differed considerably from one lesson to another. As seen from observations, most teachers reacted to students' interruptions and questions in a friendly way that gave a good impression and encouraged other students who might not be able to ask because they were shy, distracted or for any other reasons. Indeed, I observed that students were considerably more relaxed and happy in classes where teachers behaved in a friendly and informal way with students. For example, in teacher 15's lesson:

> The teacher used to allow learners to ask even while explaining,
> and rather than answered the question directly, she asked if any of

the students knew the answer. None of the students raised their hands or answered, so she started to help students to find out the answer through discussing with them in a friendly manner and providing hints. There was an atmosphere of freedom for students to state their opinions, to answer even though they were not sure and to not feel shy.

In such classes, the students were noticeably happy and content and really behaved differently from other classes where the teacher did not allow for such an atmosphere.

A further issue that could be a sign of an autonomous classroom and that could enhance learners' autonomous behaviour is encouraging them and supporting them to initiate activities, conversations, and so on. This element of enhancing autonomy in learners could be married to a large number of activities and exercises which can accustom learners to working on their own, together, or at least lessen their dependence on others. In observations, I witnessed cases where teachers try to make learners work in a way where they self-initiate their own thinking to answer a question, solve a problem, find out an answer, etc. The following extract is an example of this:

> The students were listening while the teacher was explaining. The teacher asked a question addressing all the students and asked them to try to answer individually. She allowed a few minutes after which she started to elicit answers from students who provided different answers. The teacher did not only listen to the answers but also asked the students how they reached the answers and why, rather than merely stating whether the answer was right or wrong. The students started to discuss together and correct each other, the teacher asked them to try to provide individual answers and to justify these answers. Therefore the students asked for more time. The teacher allowed them some more time but this time she started to elicit answers more quickly and helping learners to find their own answers to the questions (T 12).

This helped make students try to think on their own without outside help, as well as helped the teacher elicit the students' reflections on the questions she raised.

Discussing the students' wants with them as an autonomy-supportive procedure (Reeve et al., 1999) seems to be radical in the context of this study, at least in some areas of learning, and especially in terms of the material and the final exam content and dates. The material is mostly pre-decided by the Secretariat of Education. The teachers themselves do not have any contribution to preparing it or chance to change it; they had to follow it, and cover it in a certain time. Principally, it is for this reason that all teachers complained about the material being forced on them. In some cases, the teacher skipped the lesson or skimmed through it and asked the students to study it at home, sometimes the teacher said because it is not very important and other times because it is not really new to the students and it was better not to waste time on it. However, in the content of some presentations, the teacher left the students to decide on what they would present and what to include in the presentations. Still, sometimes teachers asked students to choose a topic from the book so they could cover as much as possible.

Another example where the teacher took her students' opinions which resulted in students being content and seeming more happy and interested in the lesson was when the students asked the teacher to let them work in groups. Group work clearly revolutionised the classroom and the course of the lessons. This affected the teachers' roles as they embraced the roles of facilitators and contributors to learning rather than controllers and authorities. Also, students' behaviours were considerably different when they were allowed to work in groups. They tended to be more interested and involved in working together, unlike when they listened to the teacher explaining and rote teaching them. Their activeness increased, and their eagerness to work in groups was very evident when they were asked to form groups or when they moved from a class where the seats were in rows to a class where seats were arranged in circles.

Another autonomy-supportive procedure, referred to in my analysis earlier as group work, is creating social learning spaces, which provides opportunities for students to participate in communities of learners and interact and learn from each other

(Murray, 2011). Communities of learners refer to chances to work with colleagues without the teacher being the director of the process. Murray (2011) provides a number of procedures that can be followed to create spaces for learners to collaborate and which create chances for them to work independently of the teacher. Amongst the steps that Murray (2011) suggests and that I noticed in the classrooms were creating spaces for learners to work together and interact, and organising events where students could work according to what they think is the appropriate way of learning and which provide them with opportunities to search, find material and present it in their own ways. I observed the first step that Murray (2011) suggests in a number of lessons. For example, the teacher asked a question and, rather than answering directly by herself or assigning one student to answer, the teacher asked the students to discuss the question in groups and provide answers from their discussions. It was recurrent in a number of lessons that the teacher asked the students to work in groups, to try to summarise a text and nominate a candidate to present in front of the class. For the second suggestion made by Murray (2011), which is organising events, the students as well as some teachers talked to me about an event initiated by one of the teachers last year. It was an 'English day' where students prepared presentations, competitions and games, all performed in the English language. In this event, the students stated that they cooperated with each other with help from the teachers who, as the students stated, provided all the help they were asked for. In the school year when this study was conducted, the students told me that they were going to arrange that same event in May and asked for my suggestions on what to do and what to include to which I responded happily because it was a sign of being a part of the context rather than an outsider. However, the students later told me that the event was cancelled for various reasons.

Amongst the important issues that are pertinent in the literature to enhancing autonomy are the issues of self-instruction and self-access. Gardner and Miller (1999) note that self-access is a widely used term as an approach by which learner autonomy can be promoted. However, Benson (2011) and Benson and Voller (1997) point out that it is only an assumption, without strong justification, that self-access work will aid the development of autonomy. The unavailability of such self-access resources is discussed in the next part.

In the following part, I present what I consider to be the constraints that determine the ways that teachers and learners behave and build their relationships. These are related in particular to participants' views and to the autonomy-supportive and autonomy-constraining practices discussed above.

4.3.4 External constraints affecting participants' behaviour

In this part I consider what I observed as constraints that affect the quality of teaching and learning. These factors are based on the participants' views and my own observations of their behaviour during the classes, the atmosphere in the whole institution, as well as the practices presented in the literature to enhance or hinder learner autonomy. Two of the important constraints that considerably affect the participants' behaviours and relate to one another reciprocally are the teaching materials used and the shortage of time. Teachers sometimes seemed to follow the books strictly without paying due attention to the requirements of students to partake in learning. In this, all the participants referred to the time of classes as insufficient to cover the materials. This was the justification of some teachers for not allowing learners to take on learning by themselves. In a number of classroom observations, I noticed that some teachers tended to skim through a certain activity or task without working on it or involving students in it. They sometimes said that the activity was similar to one that they had already done or that it was not important and it would be better to move to another more important one. For example, in teacher 07's classroom:

> The teacher started by presenting the lesson, then she assigned an activity for the students to do. She asked the students to work on it individually and moved from one student to another checking and providing help to students. About fifteen minutes passed, then she asked students to stop and if any one student could give an answer to the questions. Several students raised their hands and she asked certain students to answer in turn, praising and correcting the students. After she finished the activity with the students, she returned to her book, turned a few pages and asked students to

move to a certain page. Some students asked if she would skip those pages and she replied that topics in those pages were mostly already covered in previous lessons and were not really new to them and therefore she preferred to go to a new lesson than to waste time on topics in those pages.

This teacher's way of dealing with the content illustrates how she tried to reconcile the short time of the lesson and indulging learners to work with her or with each other. It is clear that the insufficient time is a worry for this teacher that made her skip parts of some lessons.

However, although choosing or deciding on material remains out of the hands of the teachers, there were several cases I observed when some teachers did not stick to the material provided. They used extra activities based on the material so that there was not complete dependence on it. For example, some used the title of a lesson and a few instructions from the book but seemed to initiate activities of their own that did not strictly follow the procedures suggested in the books. This might well create an atmosphere where students had opportunities to work on different ideas and activities apart from those in the books. Therefore, teachers seemed to create a variety of activities for students to work on and adapt the material to match different students' interests. However, the students seldom had their opinions listened to for deciding what to study. Therefore, forcing material on participants and a lack of flexibility in allowing them to choose their own or bring material from sources other than the prescribed material, as well as the time that is described by all the participants as insufficient limited some teachers' opportunities to provide spaces to students to learn autonomously.

Also, exams were signalled as a constraint that had a role in determining the teachers' ways of teaching and the quality of participants' relationships with each other. The quizzes that students take are arranged by the teachers themselves, usually after negotiations with the students who sometimes ask teachers to change the quiz time and suggest other times. For example, in teacher 14's class:

> The teacher was informing the students that they should take a quiz next week. The students asked her to change the date and defer it to the week after because they had a test that next week. The teacher first refused but when students insisted on changing the day of the quiz, the teacher agreed to that.

However, mid-term and final exams dates are set by the local Secretariat of Education. The teacher, students or even the head-teachers do not have the option or the right to decide on or change the dates. Moreover, the content and dates of final exams for final year students are pre-set by the Education Secretariat and are unified at a national level. Therefore, teachers and head-teachers cannot decide the times or content of these exams. Because final exams for final year students are unified at the level of the country, the teachers who teach final year classes are required to cover all the material, otherwise they will be blamed by different parties such as the head-teachers, the students and parents, as well as the inspectors. The influence of this on teachers and learners is that it deprives them of flexibility in choosing dates and times for exams, as well as requiring them to cover the prescribed material which affects the approaches of teachers and their behaviour with their students considerably. This also shows the top-down policy being followed by the Education Secretariat. Most participants expressed their discontent with these procedures and how they limit their choices in following their own preferred ways of teaching and learning

Another constraint that I have witnessed to be of high importance to the way participants behave with each other is the arrangement of seats. The seats in classrooms were mostly arranged in three rows with two students sitting at one desk. Each row usually had seven or eight desks arranged one behind the other. It is worth mentioning here that these seats were attached to the ground and it was impossible to configure them to other shapes. Fortunately, I had the chance to compare the environment in classrooms where seats were in rows with another completely different classroom; that is, one where the seats were formed into circles. The reason that makes desks arranged in circles noticeably different here is the activeness and enthusiasm that the students exhibit when they move from a 'traditional' classroom to a classroom where they form the seats according to the teacher's request or

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sometimes their own desire, or at least where the desks are not fixed to the ground. From my observation of these two different seating arrangements, I noticed that in classrooms where the seats are in rows the teacher was prevented from looking at the different students, especially students sitting on the back seats. Also, the students were unable to work together as they were able to when they sat in circles or groups. They could only work in pairs or had to turn to other students behind them, which seemed uninteresting and undesirable to them. In addition to this, when the students were not close to the teacher, they mostly became lazy and did not follow the teacher. Therefore, they did not interact with or interrupt her even when the teacher invited them to do so.

In addition to these constraints, some teachers' teaching backgrounds seemed to influence participants' practices in learning and teaching. Through observations, unsurprisingly, I noticed that mostly older teachers who have been teaching for years tended to control lessons more than those who are new graduates. This hints that controlling classes and not granting opportunities for learners to learn autonomously or be active agents in their learning is more a matter of inherited custom in teaching and negligence of modern teaching methods rather than being ingrained in the traditions of society. This is also apparent through the variety of different teachers' modes of teaching. This becomes clearer if it is noted that newly graduated teachers have attended teaching methodology courses and are familiar with different and modern ways of dealing with students. Some of the older teachers seemed to follow their own teachers' ways of teaching, usually characterised by control of lessons and performing everything themselves while making students sit and listen.

A factor that also had influenced the participants and particularly the teachers' modes of teaching was the inspectors. When asked if she allows her learners to assess their own and each others' work, the teacher replied: 'I did it twice maybe but the inspectors said no you can't just do this' (T 06). Another teacher noted that when she has an inspector in her class, she changes her way of teaching according to the inspector's guidance: 'when there is an inspector, I don't do this [make students in groups and do presentations]' (T 03).

Another constraint that might negatively affect the development of learner autonomy is the absence of self-access materials. In this analysis I tend to assume that self-access provides learners with opportunities that help them learn independently and develop their autonomy without exaggerating the role of self-access in enhancing learner autonomy. This is because, when asked in interviews, several students pointed to the lack of learning aids such as computers and a library. Therefore, the absence of self-access in the context of the study is referred to by many students as an obstacle that hinders their development of being agent learners, i.e. learners who function independently and collaboratively with each other or the teacher for their learning. The majority of students expressed the importance of using computers for their learning. They also complained about the lack of aids such as computers, a library, and an internet connection, which they see as important for them to be able to learn more effectively and not depend entirely on teachers.

Murray (2011) notes that self-access centres tend to foster in learners self-direction and meta-cognitive growth, which differs from social learning spaces in that the latter focuses on social aspects of learning. Therefore, self-access centres could be criticised on the grounds that they might enforce self-direction and learning individually in learners and thus might not be particularly beneficial or appropriate in an environment espoused with group work and a community of learning. This is because in the literature it is widely suggested that autonomous learning is interactive and interdependent, rather than involving learn-on-one's-own activities apart from the teacher, where the teacher is an important—but not the only— factor in learning and teaching. For example, and in order to illustrate that learner autonomy does not mean learning without a teacher either in self-access or otherwise, McGary (1995) notes that it is not a matter of teachers relinquishing responsibility, but more of sharing with learners the responsibility to help them develop confidence and learn more effectively, which also helps teachers themselves to be confident and teach more efficiently. Therefore, teachers could be facilitators for learners in using self-access material or centres. Moreover, Gardner et al. (1999) argue that the success of self-access depends on teachers' preparation of their students to take responsible stances in their learning through challenging students' traditional beliefs about learning and initiating activities and discussions (p .43). In the analysis of this study,

the teachers' role is linked to self-access because in cases of providing self-access material to learners, the teacher is supposed to be a facilitator and agent in learning. Likewise, if the context lacks self-access material, the teacher might have to bear an extra burden through trying to compensate for this lack. Therefore, I focused on the availability or absence of self-access equipment and material that might provide learners with opportunities to learn independently.

Through being present in the context of the study and with the participants, I observed the absence of any form of self-access facilities. By self-access here, I mean computers, a library and learning means to which learners have free access or can use freely. Students were allowed access to computers under the teacher's supervision and guidance in computer lessons rather than for the purpose of teaching them language. Also, students did not have a library where they can read, discuss with each other or borrow books. There was one for teachers to which students had minimal access, and they had to ask for permission from one of the teachers to borrow a book. Moreover, the resources in the library itself were very minimal. Learners raised these issues several times in interviews, complaining about the lack of such learning-facilitating materials. Teachers, however, seemed cooperative and would have helped learners through things such as recommending to them books to read.

I have chosen to present my accounts of these constraints because of their prominent influence during classes as well as their recurrence in the interviews. It could be said that these constraints strongly determine the roles of both teachers and students and the ways they teach and learn.

4.3.5 Summary

In this section I have responded to the second research question. I presented the participants' implementation of lessons and showed how they build up their relationships with each other. These issues are based on data from observations.

The data presented in the first part of this section were categorised according to the ways that participants behave and teach and learn. The first part showed how some

teachers primarily controlled the process of teaching and learning and how learners were seen as passive receivers of knowledge to whom teachers transfer this knowledge. It then presented how most teachers included their learners in the learning process and allowed them to learn independently and collaboratively with support, and encouraged them to take more extensive responsibility for their learning. Data presented then showed how teachers passed control to learners, and how these learners have then been offered opportunities to learn without the teachers' help and sometimes without supervision, again both independently and collaboratively.

The second part presented autonomy-supportive and autonomy-constraining practices pertinent in the literature and present in the observations. This analysis does not take the stance of juxtaposing the participants' behaviours and practices with those autonomy supportive and autonomy constraining practices and activities. Rather, I attempted to interpret their behaviours and practices in the light of what allows or deprives them of opportunities and space to take responsibility for the learning. This is simply in order not to make any assumptions that the participants of this study are or are not autonomous in a certain sense or according to a certain set of criteria, but to see the sorts of behaviour in which they exhibit their autonomy or lack of autonomy. Therefore, this part presented a discussion of the participants' behaviours and their modes of learning and teaching, as well as their practices in relation to autonomy-supportive and autonomy-constraining practices, so as to see how the practices of this study's participants fit into the overall vision of autonomy. However, it should be borne in mind that autonomy varies in forms as well as in degrees, so it should not be confined to a certain set of practices. This could help to view the variation and appropriateness of autonomy in the context of this study.

The third part presented external constraints that affect the participants' behaviours. These are based mainly on the observation data and also were reflected extensively in the teachers' and learners' views in the interviews. These constraints have shown to sometimes limit the participants' opportunities to behave in ways that create a typical learner autonomy environment. However, these constraints are not the only determinants for the modes of teaching and learning. A few teachers showed that they tend to follow the transfer mode of learning, treating students as receptacles to

be filled with knowledge. This tendency seemed to be inherited in such teachers' practices from their learning backgrounds.

According to Oxford's (2003) framework, the findings of the observations showed that in the technical perspective, the participants in this study have managed to create space and an environment in which they could teach and learn in their preferred modes. This is in spite of constraints they raised such as lack of teaching and learning aids and sometimes inability to configure seats according to their preferred ways. In relation to the psychological perspective, it was evident from the students' activeness and motivation when allowed opportunities to be active and responsible for their learning that they were in favour of such modes of learning. Teachers mostly worked on providing and creating such atmosphere where learners can act as active agents taking responsibility for their learning rather than being passive and reticent. The socio-cultural I and II perspectives were considerably evident through participants recurrently working on learning through collaboration and interaction both between learners and teachers and learners with each other. This type of work was prominent in many of the teachers' classes. Teachers in this provided opportunities for learners to work as such through different ways such as allowing them to give presentations. In the political-critical perspective, the distribution of power between learners and teachers mostly showed that teachers do not confine control for themselves with learners being passive. Rather, learners were co-partners in working on their lessons and teachers mostly adopted roles of facilitators and helpers where they support and encourage learners to be in control of their learning.

In the next section, I present the inspectors', head-teachers', teachers' who attended teachers training course and parents' representations of and beliefs about autonomy and education policy, and any expected changes in the education realm in the country due to regime change.

4.4 Participants' overall representation of autonomy and perceptions of change in education policy

This section aims mainly to present the inspectors', head-teachers', teachers' who attended a teacher training course and parents' conceptions of autonomous learning. This is to help understand how autonomy is perceived in the context of the study. It also provides participants' conceptions about education policy and its implementation in the classroom and the constraints they think affect classroom practices. It then presents their thoughts about any changes and amendments in education policy, whether such changes are expected or not and what they might involve.

4.4.1 Introduction

This part presents the perceptions of inspectors, head-teachers, some students' parents and a few teachers who attended a course in teacher training of autonomy and the relationship between education policy and classroom practices. This section also presents the participants' expectations of any change that might take place after the change in the regime of the country, and whether participants perceive such change as necessary to education policy. The term learner autonomy per se has not been used in the interviews, rather ideas and concepts underpinning learners taking responsibility for and being active in their learning were employed.

By choosing these participants, I aimed at grasping views of some authorities such as the inspectors and head-teachers on teachers and whether they have any input in the teachers' ways of teaching, as well as these participants' beliefs about who plans education policy and how far the teachers are allowed to follow certain modes of teaching and dealing with their students. The aim of choosing to interview teachers outside the case study school was to obtain wider perspectives on the issue of allowing or not allowing learners autonomy in their learning. For parents of some student participants, I wanted to find out whether parents interfere in their children's matters at school and what they think of their children taking autonomous stances in their learning. However, parents interviewed in this study reflected unawareness of

students' needs in their schools or how teaching was implemented and as Alhmali (2007) notes, parents in Libya cannot influence academic matters of their children in schools. Therefore, insights obtained from parents were poor. In these interviews, I prepared a list of themes and questions and more questions were generated during the development of the conversations and took notes of the participants' views during interviews (see appendices F, G, H, I). The constructs that emerged from these interviews fall into three categories: the participants' beliefs about permitting learners the space and opportunities to work independently from or collaboratively with each other and teachers, their perceptions of some mismatch between education policy and classroom practices, and their expectation of changes in education policy and the relationship of potential policy changes with learner autonomy.

In general, respondents' perspectives varied considerably. These differences can be mainly attributed to their teaching and learning experiences and their academic backgrounds. For example, a number of them lacked knowledge of modern teaching methods and seemed to stick to older modes of teaching, whereas the others were apparently aware of different modern teaching styles and ways of dealing with learners. However, they all agreed on some issues in their perceptions, such as the top-down education policy hierarchy to which they do not make contribution.

In the next part, I present the participants' representations and beliefs about learners' activeness in and responsibility for their learning and why they hold such opinions.

4.4.2 Participants' perceptions of learners' active and collaborative work

In this part, I present the participants' views about allowing learners responsibility in their learning to work independently of teachers and/or collaboratively with teachers or other students. The aim here is to present a more general impression held towards learner autonomy rather than presenting teachers' and students' views alone. I tried to elicit their responses with regard to granting learners opportunities to be active agents in learning, as well as what lay behind their opinions on this issue. These participants' perspectives about allowing learners responsibility are presented separately from other participants' perspectives because these participants form a slightly different population from students and the other teachers. These are

inspectors in charge of evaluating teachers' and students' performance, head-teachers whose work is related to implementing Education Secretariat decisions, teachers who have been working as teachers for a number of years—primarily before the materials have been changed and have attended teacher training courses, and some students' parents who are not involved in the school work of their children directly but who still hold their own beliefs about teaching and learning.

The participants in this part were divided into two groups according to their perceptions; one holds the teachers responsible for teaching and doing all the work in the class, and this group is represented by the inspectors and teachers with long experience of teaching. These are mainly used to following the grammar translation method and their responses reflected a lack of knowledge of modern language teaching methods. The other group thought that the teachers should not be the prime figures in the class and that students should be granted active roles and be allowed to work on their learning rather than just depend on teachers. Newly graduated teachers, one inspector and one head-teacher represented this belief, and they held positive beliefs about modes of teaching that grant learners opportunities to be active and see teachers as contributors to and facilitators of the teaching-learning process.

When asked about his opinions about allowing learners responsibility and being active in learning, one of the inspectors commented as follows:

> It is not the role of the students to work in the class, this is the role of the teacher to explain things and make things clear for the students because the teacher knows more than them and knows what they need. Students depend on the teacher, it is normal. They can't learn without the teacher. For me, it is not acceptable or good that students don't follow the teacher or work by themselves (Insp. 02).

Also, one of the teachers who has been teaching for about fifteen years held a similar opinion on this:

> The teacher should teach, how can students learn by themselves? And what should the teacher do then? I mean if the teacher doesn't

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> explain and tell students the things they should do or how to do
>
> them, how will learners know by themselves? (T 16).

These participants' negative conceptions towards allowing learners to be active in the class and perceiving the role of the teacher as a dominator in the teaching and learning process illustrates their rejection of the idea of allowing learners responsibility for their learning. It also hints at the tradition that has been followed with them when they were students and the mode of teaching they have been following; this will become even clearer later in this section.

In addition to considering working in the class a responsibility of the teacher, such participants who embraced 'anti-learner-responsibility' attitudes also emphasised the role of the students as receivers of knowledge who cannot work independently of the teacher. For example, inspector 02 stated: 'Students can't learn by themselves or without the teacher, the teacher should teach them, explain, show them how they do exercises, teach them vocabulary, grammar, etc'. Also, one head-teacher said:

> The students are used to listen to the teacher explaining, they have
>
> to follow the teacher, they cannot do without the teacher because
>
> they are used to get work done by the teacher so they can't learn
>
> without the teacher (H-T 1).

These types of responses show that for these participants the ideal of allowing learners independence or responsibility in their work is unacceptable and unreasonable and is perceived as an inappropriate mode of classroom work. Their representation of students' independent and collaborative work exhibits their lack of awareness of modern teaching methods. They reflect the tradition followed in previous years when the old syllabus based on the grammar translation method was employed. This material was changed around ten years ago (Shihiba, 2011; Aldabbus, 2008) (see also Chapter One for more about the employment of the new syllabus).

Therefore, these participants are uncomfortable with the modes of learning-teaching where teachers are not the main responsible actors and students are allowed to be active agents in learning. Their criterion is their past experience, where they have

been educated in an atmosphere advocating the supremacy of the teacher and inactive roles of learners.

The other group of participants showed support for teaching that does not overemphasise the teachers' roles or leave learners as passive recipients of knowledge. As these participants are mostly those who have attended English language teaching methods courses, received training in teaching via modern language teaching methods, or attended teacher training sessions in the year when I collected data for this study, their views reflect the considerable influence of their knowledge of modern teaching methods. Nonetheless, not all participants in this category are teachers who have taken teaching methods courses and attended teacher training sessions; there were also one of the inspectors as well as one of the head-teachers. These, although they have not been targeted by courses of teacher training and have been in the education sector for a long time, embraced attitudes that were different from their counterparts. Unlike the other inspectors and the other head-teachers, they believed in the importance and the feasibility of allowing learners the spaces and a degree of freedom to practise what they learn as well as permitting them opportunities to learn in the ways that best suit them. For example, one head-teacher believed that:

> I used to teach in the past and I didn't use to make students work by themselves actually, but now I find things different. I think teaching has new ways now, I mean students must be able to work together or with the teacher and not only work in the school but also outside school like with each other or by themselves (H-T 2).

Also, inspector 01 pointed out:

> When I was a student and also when I was a teacher, the teachers did everything in the lessons; we only followed the teachers and did what they told us. At that time we didn't grasp a lot but we couldn't change it and actually we didn't know other ways. After I became a teacher, I found that students must work with the teacher and take

part in the lessons not only sit down and listen to the teachers'
orders (Insp. 01).

It is understandable that this participant was unaware of his needs in the lessons as a learner particularly if the teacher did not work on making or helping learners realise their roles as active learners. However, only when he became a teacher did he realise that allowing learners to work autonomously presents different results in the class and that learners should be allowed active roles in learning.

One of the teachers, 'teacher 18', who attended a teacher training course was quite enthusiastic about the idea which she noted was 'relatively new' to her:

> It is very important and very beneficial that learners become active and work in the class rather than depend on the teacher and sit down only. The teacher will never teach very well if he doesn't make students active and make them work with each other and maybe alone. I liked this way of teaching and I am sure it is better than traditional ways of teaching, but I also think it is not easy.

This teacher's acceptance of the notions of allowing learners opportunities to be active and autonomous comes from her comparison between old and modern teaching methods. She seemed to have received teaching through old modes of teaching, and was later introduced to ideas about allowing learners the space to work on their learning. Perhaps this is the reason behind her preference and enthusiasm for revolutionising the classroom relationship between teachers and students.

Such participants' responses show that it is not a matter of cultural rejection for the ideals of permitting space and opportunities for learners to work on their learning and sharing work with them, as well as involving them in learning, but it seems that it is more of a trend of individual teachers. That is, those who believed in granting learners chances to be active in learning have been familiar with modern teaching methods, whereas other participants whose beliefs about learners taking autonomous stances in learning are less positive have shown that they are unfamiliar with modern teaching techniques and are only used to traditional methods.

In the following part, I present participants' accounts of education policy and what is being practised in classrooms.

4.4.3 Participants' perceptions of education policy and classroom practices

This part looks at how the participants conceive education policy; who issues this policy and whether they have to follow it strictly or have the freedom to follow their own approaches in certain schools. It also presents the participants' views of classroom practices with regard to the implementation of education policy.

The mismatch between education policies and classroom practices has been attributed to different reasons such as the discrepancy between communicative language teaching (CLT) and social and cultural norms of a certain context (e.g. Ellis, 1996), and the misunderstanding of teachers about CLT (Carless, 2003). In the context of this study, although education policy recognises freedom of choice for students and considers choosing what suits them best as their right (cf. Chapter One), decisions about what suits learners are not made by the students themselves but through what best matches the requirements of the supporters of the previous regime. For example, 'freedom of thought' did not permit spreading ideas considered alien to the Libyan culture; foreign languages were considered to be Western imports and a threat to the culture of the country. This led to the expulsion of the English language from school and university curricula, a decision that was principally political (Giffard, 1981). Moreover, the students were assigned to enter certain specialisations not on the basis of their intellectual abilities, but on their political reliability (Giffard, 1981). Therefore, as Giffard (1981) notes, the unsettled conditions of Libyan education were the result of the political demands of the regime. Such incidents illustrate the tendency and nature of education policy and who controls it and show that it has been plagued with an amount of obedience to what is issued by the Secretariat of Education without any form of opposition. This is clear in some of the participants' comments in this research.

Here, I present the participants' perceptions of education policy and what happens in the educational institutions in regard to granting learners spaces for learning. All of the participants' responses to this issue referred primarily to the top down policy of

education that is followed, and to the lack of freedom given to teachers in the first place and to head-teachers and heads of education offices. For example, one of the head-teachers stated: 'We could not have our own plans to follow in our school. Almost everything was decided by the Education Secretariat and we had to follow it strictly' (H-T 2). When he was asked to whom he refers by 'we', this head-teacher said he was referring to the head-teacher himself and his teachers. This shows the top-down hierarchy of education policy, with officials at the top controlling issues pertaining to schools and their systems. One of the inspectors also commented on the education policy hierarchy as: 'It is decided by the head of the Education Secretariat and we don't have any right or freedom to contribute or change the way schools or teachers work. It is strictly centralised' (Insp. 03). That decision making is exclusive to the Education Secretariat can deprive the teachers, head-teachers and inspectors of the right to innovate or adopt methods that they find more appropriate to their students and to the teaching-learning process.

When participants in this section were asked about the ideals of education policy and the practices in the classroom and whether these are in harmony or not, they mostly showed ignorance of education policy and stated that their responsibilities are limited to inspection visits to classrooms for inspectors, teaching and marking exams for teachers, and overseeing the school for head-teachers. One head-teacher stated: 'We are here for students to learn, teachers have books they use to teach and then students take exams. Good teachers make students understand and get good results in exams' (H-T 01).

Unlike most of the teachers in the case study school, some of the participants here were unaware of modes of teaching that permit learners responsibility in their leaning. Since education policy consists of terms that call for such ideals, the participants' unawareness of them shows their ignorance of education policy as well as the centralisation that was prevalent in determining the policy of the education system which perhaps is one reason for failing to implement it. Education seems to have been rotating in the same place for years without revisions or renewal of its policy or any attempts to develop it by those in charge of education.

From the perspectives of some of the participants in this part, this has led to preventing these parties, the teachers, head-teachers and inspectors, from taking creative and responsible roles in the education process. They have no power or right to take part in determining the materials that students study, the time, number or length of classes, the extra-curricular activities for students, etc. The result is that these parties' contributions are in a frozen state. They mostly only repeat what they have seen or done in the past, practise what they have gone through in older schools, and reproduce the way in which they have been taught, imprinted by the absence of creativity. One of the consequences of this is that some participants, in particular those who had been taught in and used to teach through older teaching methods, perceive education policy aspects that call for and advocate learner independence and allowing learners chances to be active and responsible in their learning as unacceptable and unreasonable. These participants' perceptions very likely arise from being accustomed to older teaching methods, particularly the grammar translation method, as well as their negligence or ignorance of the modern teaching methods and trends. One inspector stated:

> It is not acceptable that students are free to choose their field of
> study because they are not aware of what is best for them. About
> their work in the classroom, they can't learn without the teacher,
> the teacher must teach. This is how we learnt; the teacher teaches
> and so students learn (Insp. 03).

Another inspector reflected his belief in the primacy of teachers' roles by saying that the teacher should teach rather than students being active and depending on themselves because students are unable to work or progress in their learning without the teacher. He noted: 'Teaching means the teacher is teacher, he teaches students. Students can't learn without the teacher. Without the teacher the students cannot learn or understand' (Insp. 02).

By their perceptions of teachers' roles as authoritarian, two of the three inspectors, one head-teacher and a teacher reinforced authoritarian roles of teachers and passive roles of students. This is because these inspectors perceive their roles to 'evaluate the teacher's knowledge of the subject' (Insp. 01, Insp. 02, Insp. 03); 'observe the

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teacher's degree of control of class and the students' commitment to teachers' orders' (Insp. 02, Insp. 03); observe 'the amount of course books being covered and whether it is probable the teacher will be able to cover all the units of the books' (Insp. 02, Insp. 03); comment on 'the students' levels' (Insp. 01, Insp. 02, Insp. 03). The head-teacher noted that the role of head-teachers is to 'work to ensure the students' results in exams are good' (H-T 01); and the teacher noted that teachers should 'do the best to cover the materials and make students understand' (T 16).

The emphasis was on the students' level for these participants; that is, a good level of students is a sign of good teachers regardless of how teachers teach or how they behave with their students. Also, an important sign of a good teacher is the results that students obtain in exams; i.e. if students obtain good marks, especially in final exams, this means that the teacher is considered well-qualified and follows good teaching modes. Therefore, the emphasis on students' levels, disregarding the modes of teaching and learning and, in particular, the inspectors' concern about the ways teachers teach and about the students' levels rather than following education policy aspects show a degree of discrepancy between education policy and classroom practices. That is, the over-concern on students' levels and on the teachers' modes of teaching led to neglecting education policy aspects that call for allowing learners opportunities to be responsible for their learning and therefore resulted in discrepancy between theory and practice. This could also be attributed to ignorance of education policy.

Therefore, those who hold old-fashioned views about teaching and learning (e.g. inspector 03; head-teacher 01 and teacher 16) were not aware of education policy aspects that call for allowing learners active roles and responsibility for their learning, as well as they were not involved in determining ways of the deployment of these aspects. Other participants such as inspector 01 and teacher 18 who were aware of teachers' roles as facilitators and of learners' roles as active, blamed the centralism of the education system of the country which deprives them of being able to innovate and direct education towards more modern pathways (cf. Elhensheri, 2004). The following extract from teacher 17 exemplifies this situation. This participant shows awareness of modern teaching methods and the differences

between them and traditional ones: 'When we were students, the teacher used to explain everything for us, we students didn't explain lessons or so, we only answered exercises, read from time to time, did homework at home and so on, because teacher was teacher' (T 17). This teacher noted that teaching has changed and that modern modes of teaching and learning have been developed and used. He said: 'Now things have changed and students now are active in their learning not as in the past' (T 17). With this comparison, this teacher showed that he is an advocate of learners taking responsibility for their learning, very probably because of his awareness of the differences between traditional and modern teaching modes and techniques.

In the next part I present participants' perceptions and expectations of any changes in education policy of the context of this study and the relation of potential changes, if there are any, to learner autonomy.

4.4.4 Participants' perceptions of education policy and expectations of changes in teacher-student relationships

I present here the participants' perceptions of education policy and any changes in the policy of education and teacher-student relationships after the change in the regime of the country. That is, whether participants believe there have been or will be modifications in the articles of education policy and particularly in terms of its implementation relating to learner autonomy, and in the teacher-student relationship and modes of teaching and learning.

Generally, participants had only minimal information about the aspects of education policy as was discussed in the previous part. Their ideas about the need for change included only certain aspects of education. When asked what they suggest should or hope will be changed about education and education policy, their responses were often related to the provision of teaching aids, recruiting more teachers, allocating more lessons, and raising teachers' salaries. It should be noted that issues that relate to allowing learners responsibility in their learning, and that touch on student-teacher relationships or modes of teaching and learning, were not on the priority list for them. Therefore, I drew their attention to these issues through focusing questions in the interviews and trying to focus the talk on these issues.

Participants in this regard divided into two groups. A number of participants who did not have sufficient knowledge about the aspects of education policy and how it advocates allowing learners opportunities to be autonomous were against change in the aspects of education policy. However, this group perceived change to be unnecessary mainly because of their ignorance of education policy rather than their satisfaction with its implementation. It could also be said that participants who were unaware of education policy aspects providing opportunities to learners to be autonomous believed that education policy advocates teachers' dominance and learners' taking passive roles and therefore they perceived change to be unnecessary. For example, one inspector stated: 'It is fine this way, teachers do their jobs and students learn, that is how teaching is so why is the change? Teachers know their work and the good teacher explains well to students and makes them understand' (Insp. 03). This participant considered the teacher who explains well and who does not allow learners opportunities for working independently a good teacher. Also, one head-teacher presented a similar view: 'Teachers should be in control of the students because they know how to teach and if you let students without control they will play and waste their time. So the teacher must work for them' (H-T. 01). This head-teacher's comment presents her belief that students cannot learn by themselves and that the teacher's control is fundamental in teaching and learning. Such participants' perceptions of change to be unnecessary are mainly attributed to their ignorance of education policy aspects that call for allowing learners opportunities to be autonomous rather than because of education policy opposing learners taking responsibility for their learning. This can also be attributed to ignorance of such participants of modern teaching methods and following old-fashioned ones. This is what parent 01 explained:

> Teachers used to explain to us, we didn't work by ourselves or with each other, we only read from the book or answered questions when the teacher ordered us. I think this is teaching, I don't think it should change (Par. 01).

I asked this participant why he believed that teaching should be performed by teachers while students remain passive, he attributed this to his experience as a

student and the mode of teaching that teachers followed in the past: 'It is from my experience as a student. I am not a teacher so I don't know much about teaching but that is how we had learnt at school' (Par. 01). Therefore, preference for teachers' dominance for this participant is attributed to his experience as a student. When I explained to these participants that education policy allows students to take responsibility for their learning, they noted that they would not advocate learners being autonomous, and that education should not make students autonomous in their learning Therefore, their perceptions for learners being autonomous were negative and they claimed that teachers should be the authority and perform the teaching solely in class. This means that they first considered change in education policy to be unnecessary because they thought education policy encourages teachers' control of teaching and deprives learners of taking responsibility for their learning.

Other participants who were aware of the aspects of education policy and were in favour of allowing learners opportunities to be responsible for learning were satisfied with education policy aspects and expressed that education policy does not require amendment or change. These participants saw no necessity for change because they perceived harmony between education policy and its implementation to a certain degree. For example, teacher 18 noted: 'Good teaching is when students are active and work with the teacher on their lessons. I follow teacher's guide to do that in lessons, and education encourage this'; inspector 01 pointed out: 'Education supports learners to be active and work hard with teachers, and teachers to follow modern teaching methods rather than old ones when only teachers explain all the time'; and head-teacher 02 explained: 'I can't make teachers teach in a certain way but it is better to make students active and learn by themselves. This is good teaching, I think'.

However, such participants stressed that education policy is not implemented effectively and therefore suggested a number of points. They mainly criticised the top-down policy of education, suggested decentralising the education hierarchy to give more rights to schools to implement exams at times that are comfortable for them and their students: 'I think they should let us work on our schools with some freedom, not enforce everything from Education Secretariat, for example decide

exams by ourselves' (H-T. 02); increasing either the length or amount of lessons: 'The time of most lessons is not enough, I think they should add more lessons or make classes longer like one hour instead of forty-five minutes for one class' (T. 18); providing teaching aids such as computers and books to which students can have free access: 'We teachers need lots of things to help us in our teaching such as books students can use when they want, computers as well as cassette players because lessons in the books stress using these things' (T. 17); and providing teaching methodology courses to teachers:

> Some teachers are not good enough, I know some who did not take teaching methods courses at all and do not teach according to a certain method. The Education Secretariat should give courses to teachers on how to deal with students and the materials they use in a modern way not in old and traditional ways (Insp. 01).

One of the teachers commented on this last point saying:

> We took some training courses but these were not serious, they did not show us how to deal with students or present lessons or so on, they showed us things we know or can know by ourselves such as information about the content of lessons in the books, new vocabulary and such superficial issues (T. 18).

Changes in the student-teacher relationships and in the acceptance of modern teaching techniques started to become evident in the context of the study. This change refers to effective implementation of education policy and recognising the importance of students being autonomous in the context. One of the teachers (T. 06) noted that one of the inspectors said that allowing learners to evaluate their work and each others' work was not a good idea. However, she noted that after attending a teacher-training course, the inspector changed her mind:

> R: So you don't make them check each other's work.

> T 06: No, it depends. It was in writing, I did it twice maybe but the inspectors said no, you can't just do this.

R: She said it is not good?

T 06: Yes. Because I do this as a short test, it was OK. And I ask them to exchange the papers together and try to correct the work for themselves. The first time, she said no but after that when we had a course 'TEFL' she said that it is good to have this as to go with the time of the lesson.

Therefore, for the participants in this section, change should involve the implementation of education policy rather than change or modification in its aspects per se. That is, participants who were aware of the aspects of education policy stated some discontent with the implementation of education policy rather with its aspects themselves. Participants who were unaware of aspects of education policy expressed their approval of the modes of instruction that deprive students from taking active roles in their learning because of ignorance of the education policy aspects that encourage allowing learners responsibility for their learning and of modern teaching and learning modes.

It could be concluded that the perceived mismatch between education policy aspects and the classroom practices lies mainly in the ineffective implementation of these aspects rather than because these aspects are not being in favour of allowing learners responsibility and control of their learning or because learner autonomy being inappropriate in the context of this study.

4.4.5 Summary

In this section, I presented the participants' overall perceptions of autonomy and allowing learners responsibility in their learning in the context of the study. The term autonomy was new for most of the participants; however, some believed that it is necessary for students to be granted the space to take responsibility and be autonomous in learning. In general, the ideal of learner autonomy itself was not something that is rejected or alien to most participants, but its implementation is still affected by constraints, the most important of which was the influence of experiences of teachers, giving prominence to older teaching traditions. Then, I presented these

participants' views in regard to perceived discrepancies between the ideals of education policy and the classroom practices, what they think lie behind this, and what they suggest for education policy to be implemented effectively. Generally, participants did not have sufficient knowledge about education policy and what it aims to do and were aware that education policy is imposed by higher authorities represented by the Education Secretariat of the country. In the final part, I presented whether participants expect changes in education after the change in the regime of the country or not and whether they see change as necessary or not. The participants' perceptions in this regard showed some participants' unawareness of education policy aspects, and other participants' perceptions of ineffective implementation of education policy. Therefore, change has generally been suggested in terms of ways for implementing education policy rather than change in its aspects. However, generally, education policy was something that the participants did not have sufficient knowledge about. They all noted that they were not involved in determining what it consists of or how it is determined. It is dictated by a higher authority, which is the Education Secretariat. Minor issues such as mid-term exams for students are normally assigned by teachers themselves in the schools or by the head of the school. However, constraints such as those discussed in 4.3.4 (e.g. inspectors) proved to have considerable influence on the teachers' behaviour with their students and on the choice of modes of teaching.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Discussion of Findings

The participants' views about learner autonomy and how they practise it have provided an insightful understanding for how autonomy is perceived and practised in a contextually appropriate realisation. Their practices and perceptions of their roles and each others' roles exhibited considerable appreciation of the value of autonomy and a particular understanding of this concept. Therefore, there was evidence that autonomy was not an alien concept within the Libyan culture, and I have found practices which indicate how autonomy manifests itself in this context.

In this chapter, I summarise the findings from the participants' perceptions and practices. First, I present the research questions again here in order to show how I responded to them.

1-How do teachers and learners perceive their roles in the learning process?
- A- How do learners and teachers interpret their roles and each others' roles in learning and teaching?
- B- How do these interpretations relate to learner autonomy?
- C- How do learners and teachers think their interpretations and perceptions of learner autonomy might affect learning and teaching?

2- What type of relationship between learners and teachers is prevalent in the classroom and what affects it?
- A- How, if there is any, is autonomy manifested in the teachers' and learners' practices and relationships?
- B- What constraints relating to learner autonomy affect teaching and learning and the teacher-learner relationship?

3- Because of the regime change in Libya, which occurred mid-way through my research and which has potentially affected education policy there, a pedagogical question became pertinent in the course of asking the previous questions:

    A- In the light of the Government regime change in Libya, are changes to classroom and learner-teacher relationships expected, and if there are any, are they related to any form of autonomy?

I start here by presenting the students perceptions of autonomy and what they understand by it.

5.1 Students' understanding of autonomy

Students' perceptions of autonomy can be divided into two main types: the first group of students, who were very few, explained that they cannot work on their learning without the teacher and that the teacher is important for their learning. They referred to the teacher as the one who has the knowledge and it is the teacher who should transfer this knowledge to them. They perceived their roles as receivers of knowledge from teachers.

The other group—who were the great majority—believed that they should be allowed opportunities and space to take control of their learning. For example, the students had a high level of awareness and understanding of their roles as active, participating agents who should take control of their learning, holding negative attitudes towards students being passive and reticent and teachers being authoritative and controlling. One of the channels through which they expressed as well as practised their preferred modes of learning was collaboration with each other as well as with teachers. This activity was favoured by the majority of students. Another activity that students pointed out as preferable to them was working in groups to be involved in discussions and to elaborate on what the teacher presents. In this, the teachers were sometimes outside the circle of discussion, interfering minimally to redirect the discussion back to the point of interest, to provide help and to observe what the students were doing. Furthermore, students exhibited considerable readiness and interest in giving presentations and explaining lessons in front of the class. They referred to these activities as interesting and motivating, as well as being most

beneficial for them in their learning. The great majority of students preferred being given such chances and opportunities to perform actively in the classrooms. Students played active roles when they were allowed such opportunities. However, their views in this regard were sometimes contingent on teachers' provision of a good amount of encouragement and an appropriate atmosphere and space for them to manoeuvre. Regarding their views of good teachers, students described good teachers as those who are encouraging for them to work on their learning, mostly in collaboration with each other, and who help them and sometimes instruct them and tell them what to do and how to perform tasks to aid their learning. Also, they noted that good teachers are those who treat them the same without favouring certain students or neglecting others, who are friendly with them in working on tasks and doing activities and when they do not understand what teachers ask them to do. Students' perceptions of their own teachers matched their perceptions of good teachers to a large degree, although there were incidents when they pointed out that some teachers tend to control classrooms and do not allow students opportunities to work on their lessons or be active. Teachers' behaviours in this regard according to students ranged from almost total control of lessons to leaving students to work on their lessons with each other with minimal or no intervention. However, observations showed that the norm in lessons was an atmosphere of sharing work and collaborating on the work in lessons. Students' preferences in learning were focused on the type of work they do collaboratively with each other as well as with their teachers, and on the seating arrangement being in circles which allows them to work in groups. Students' accounts of autonomous learning showed that they appreciated and perceived this type of work as advantageous and beneficial for them. Most of the students noted that this allows them to be involved in learning so that they understand more and find it interesting and motivating. When asked about being allowed to work actively and according to their preferred modes of learning, students explained that most of their teachers allow them to do this and provide them with the opportunities and the appropriate atmosphere to work as such. In this category, students' views also showed that they were aware of the importance of taking responsibility for and working actively on their learning. Another important aspect that was demonstrated in the students' views towards autonomous learning is their desire and willingness to

work actively on their learning. Students mostly expressed their willingness to work on their learning both independently and in collaboration with other students or the teacher. Nonetheless, in the great majority of their responses, students did not deny the teachers' roles in facilitating and aiding them taking responsibility and creating the appropriate atmosphere to work according to their preferred modes of learning. They expressed recognition of the teachers' roles to explain difficult parts of lessons which they would not be able to work on without the teacher, or when they seek help from teachers when they are not able to proceed.

Now, I present the teachers' perceptions of autonomy.

5.2 Teachers' understanding of autonomy

Teachers too were classified into two groups according to the perceptions they held about learner autonomy. There were a few teachers who believed that they were the primary figures in the teaching-learning process; they thought they should perform learning as they own the knowledge that should be transferred to learners who were perceived as unable to learn or work on their own without teachers. Thus, these teachers described learners as being obedient to teachers' orders and following teachers' plans. Such students therefore would be introvert, inactive, obedient and dependent on teachers. Therefore, according to such teachers, students were to be spoon-fed. These teachers' views are best explained in Freire's (1974) 'banking model', where 'the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor' (1974, p. 72).

The largest group of teachers, however, perceived their roles as agents who should involve students, integrate them in learning, allow them to work on their learning and create the appropriate classroom environment for them to be active in learning rather than be reticent and passive. They also referred to one of their roles as being facilitators of independence for learners in order for them to work actively on their learning. These teachers criticised classrooms that deprive learners of opportunities to be autonomous and students who are over-dependent on teachers. Their conceptions of students tended to favour students who are extrovert, active and able to work independently of them. Some of these teachers explained that such students

facilitate the task of teachers whereas others noted that such students would presuppose greater and more work on the part of teachers. However, it was a general consensus amongst such teachers that these are characteristics of good students and that such students would benefit most and would be better learners in future.

Teachers' views about good language learning and their own and their students' roles in this also differed from teacher to teacher. Some teachers considered good language learning to be student directed, where learners are active, hard-working and independent and teachers play a less primary role through helping and providing facilitation to learners. Other teachers held the opposite view. They perceived themselves as the most important party in good language learning: they held the teacher responsible for teaching and learners responsible for receiving knowledge and following teachers' orders. This relates to teachers' opinions about effective language teaching. In this regard some teachers believed that for teaching to be effective, it should be performed by teachers who explain, help and direct students about what and how to do things in their learning.

The participant teachers' views about autonomy and students being autonomous in their learning summed up their perceptions of their roles and their opinions about their students' roles as well as their understanding of autonomy. Most of the teachers believed that learners adopting active roles and taking control of their learning are necessary for effective learning. They also depicted this as being the student's right in learning. Other teachers held a negative view towards learners being autonomous. They thought that learning which learners participate actively in and take control of is not effective and is not an appropriate approach to teaching and learning. Still, a few other teachers held students responsible for being involved and active in learning and thought that they cannot force learners to be autonomous. However, most of the teachers pointed out that learning should be student-directed and students should be the primary agents in the teaching-learning process. The teachers also presented their accounts of their interpretation of 'autonomy' and what it involves on the parts of teachers and students. Most teachers perceived autonomy to refer to learners being allowed to behave according to their preferences and needs in learning, being responsible for their learning, working actively on learning and doing tasks without

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the teacher. Also, teachers mostly raised the importance of teachers' roles in facilitating autonomy in learning through creating an appropriate classroom atmosphere and encouraging learners, as well as helping them to work independently.

In the following section I summarise the findings of the participants' practices and behaviours and their relationships in the classroom. That is, how they learn and teach, how they behave in the classroom and the school and how they build their relationships with each other.

5.3 Participants' practices of autonomy

The findings in regard to the participants' relationship and their behaviours and practices in learning and teaching centred on the following main themes: transmission, scaffolding, handing over and autonomy-supportive and autonomy constraining practices.

In the transmission mode of teaching and learning, teachers typically followed a depository model of instruction where they are authorities to whom students should succumb and follow. Features of such classrooms were students' passiveness, teachers' domination, lack of negotiation and de-contextualised learning. Lessons were presented in a traditional manner with the teacher being the authority who knows everything and students are portrayed as receivers of knowledge who sit in silence with knowledge being poured into their heads by teachers. Student participation in such classes was minimal and was almost exclusively confined to them asking a few questions after being given permission by the teacher, or to doing homework that is set by the teacher. Homework itself seemed to be for the purpose of assessing students' understanding of lessons and is presented in a routine manner that perhaps deprives it of wider benefits.

Such classrooms exhibited three ways in which students are deprived of opportunities and the right to be active, autonomous learners. The first, classroom control by teachers, is where the classroom atmosphere was entirely dominated by the teacher. What differentiates this control from the following two methods of

classroom control is that students are not allowed any form of involvement or the space to state their opinions or wants, whereas in the next two modes of control, learners sometimes express their wants but these are ignored, suppressed or discouraged by teachers. The second way that teachers control classrooms is through ignoring the students when they state their opinions, wants and suggestions. This leads to greater control of classes by teachers since students withdraw because their suggestions, initiation of conversations and interruptions are disregarded. Another way through which students' initiative is suppressed is teachers discouraging students. This took the form of teachers ordering students not to interrupt them or present suggestions or opinions about lessons or activities, and reacting to students' incorrect answers in a discouraging way. These teachers' behaviours made students not only cease to present their suggestions and opinions or ask for help and so on, but also to withdraw from taking part when teachers invite them to do so. Although the number of teachers who suppress students in this way was small, the incidents themselves were recurrent among such teachers.

In other cases, the participants' relationships and their practices and behaviours showed another dimension which was imprinted by less formality, more openness, more friendliness and greater appreciation of students' needs and preferences. I titled this 'scaffolding' because teachers' provision of aids to students and preparing them to take responsibility for learning were the most recurrent and clearest in such teachers' behaviours with students. In this approach, teachers worked on setting students tasks in which they were allowed to work independently and teachers interfered usually only when students requested help or guidance. The help teachers provided to students ranged in degrees: sometimes it was too extensive and other times it was too minimal that it sometimes ruined the scaffolding, and it was not linear but moved forwards and backwards. One of the ways that teachers provided help to students and relinquished control of lessons was through providing cues to students. This was quite recurrent in most teachers' behaviour with students. Another aspect through which teachers scaffolded their learners' abilities to be active and responsible for their learning was preparing and helping them to give presentations. Students were allowed to give presentations they had prepared at home where teachers discuss with students the topics of presentations, explain to them what is

supposed to be included in the presentations and help them in delivering them in front of the class. However, the process of scaffolding was sometimes distorted by teachers interfering too quickly to provide help for students. Such teachers justified this by the insufficient time available in classes and noted that allowing learners opportunities and spaces to work on their learning by themselves was time consuming. The important thing to be noted here is that teachers' help is withdrawn gradually, leaving students to take more independent stances in their work and learning. This stage of helping students is followed by teachers passing control to learners. In this stage, teachers were observed to hand over control or at least a share of control to learners. The results of scaffolding were evident in a number of classes where learners started to initiate and develop conversations, give presentations without teachers' intervention and ask teachers to allow them to work on activities and tasks by themselves. These stages are not linear but recursive; that is, teachers and students move backwards and forwards between them rather than finishing one stage and then transferring to another. It should be noted here that such teachers usually showed lenience and friendliness towards students' poor performance and followed it by encouragement and discussion both with the teachers themselves and with other students.

I also linked my analysis to the wider literature through providing evidence from observations matching theoretical descriptions of autonomy-supportive and autonomy-constraining practices. These are not meant to compare the realisation and forms of autonomy in the current study's context to how autonomy is prescribed in the literature; rather, I wanted to identify practices within this context. Some autonomy-supportive practices were indeed evident in the teacher-learner relationships and their practices and behaviours. These ranged in forms and degrees depending on teachers' and students' views and modes of learning and their readiness to follow such practices. Examples of autonomy supportive practices that were present and practised by the participants were teachers listening to and taking into consideration their students' suggestions and views (to a certain extent), allowing students time to answer or discuss answers before teachers themselves answer questions, sometimes discussing with students what they want to do, responding to students' questions, encouraging students' initiatives, and creating an

autonomy-supportive environment such as allowing learners to give presentations and work in groups. However, such practices were not present in all the classes or by all teachers. Rather some teachers even showed opposite practices and behaviours such as not allowing learners to state their opinions and suggestions, not giving them opportunities to work together and give presentations, and giving answers to questions without allowing time for students to work out the answers for themselves.

Findings of this study also related to constraints that proved to have a considerable effect on participants, the nature of their relationships and their styles of teaching and learning. The main constraints that were shown to strongly affect the participants and the quality of their work and their learning are summarised as follow. The materials that are used are prescribed by the Education Secretariat and teachers are required to complete them in the academic year as the exams for final year students are unified at the level of the whole country and cover all the materials. Teachers find themselves obliged to cover these books or face blame and criticism from head-teachers, inspectors and parents. This is also related to the amount of time allotted to classes. Teachers referred to the time available being insufficient and said that classes should be increased in number and length of time. This has an effect on the teachers' style of teaching by making them adopt more controlling, authoritative roles, because allowing learners spaces and opportunities is described by a number of teachers as being time-consuming. Another constraint that affected the type of work inside classrooms was the arrangement of seats. These were mostly arranged in rows and, being attached to the ground, were impossible to move to other shapes. Only in one classroom seats could be moved and configured freely, and this was the favourite classroom for students. Also, some teachers' teaching backgrounds had an influence on their own and their students' styles of working in classes. Such teachers were used to following traditional modes of teaching where they are considered authorities to whom learners listen and follow obediently without disagreement. Their perceptions of allowing learners spaces and involving them in learning were negative and they showed ignorance of such teaching modes. Another constraint that proved to have some effect on participants was the absence of teaching aids. There was only one room equipped with an overhead projector, and some teachers bring their own laptops to use in classrooms. There was a language laboratory but it seemed not to be

exploited, and there was only one library available only for the teachers which itself was short of resources. Therefore, participants expressed their views of the importance of such teaching facilities as computers, internet connections and a library.

5.4 The overall perceptions of autonomy and change in education policy

This section of the analysis was concerned with presenting the perceptions of mainly head-teachers, inspectors, parents and some teachers who had attended a teacher training course. The analysis in this section focused on three areas: the overall perceptions of learner autonomy in the current context, the perceived mismatch between education policy and classroom practices, and any perceived changes in education policy in the post-conflict period. Participants' perceptions about allowing learners to take control of their learning and to be active can be divided into two groups: the first group consider teachers as responsible for teaching; unsurprisingly, these participants were mostly inspectors and teachers with long teaching experience. In short they were used to old teaching methods; therefore they were ignorant of any modern teaching methods. The other participants showed recognition of the students' rights to be active agents in and responsible for their learning.

The second area was the participants' perceptions of the perceived mismatch between the ideals of education policy and the practices that are prevalent in classrooms. Although I observed a considerable degree of autonomy being practised by learners and teachers, the participants in this regard blamed the top-down hierarchy for determining the items of education policy and for the lack of freedom offered to teachers, head-teachers and education offices in determining the structure of their schools, dates and types of exams, the teaching methods teachers might employ, the materials and the number and length of classes.

In regard to any changes that have taken place in the post-conflict period, some participants noted that while there has been change in the mode of instruction in schools, none of the participants referred to change in education policy.

The findings of this study are now related to Oxford's (2003) framework.

5.5 Relating findings to theoretical framework

From these findings of the study, I derive the following conclusions related to and resonating very well with Oxford's (2003) four-aspect model for accounting for learner autonomy.

5.5.1 Technical perspective: focus on the physical situation

The findings in this aspect concern the participants' conceptions of the surroundings and the aids provided in the context and their views towards these, and how they see these as necessary or complementary to effective learning and teaching. It should be noted that the physical appearance of classrooms was remarkably inappropriate for creating an atmosphere that accommodates learner autonomy. Examples of this were the style of arranging seats, the lack of projectors, the lack of computers which students may employ for their learning, and the lack of a library to which students could have access and which they could benefit from. The shortage of these necessary teaching and learning aids in the context could be a sign of the education policy makers' ignorance of the importance of providing learners with an environment where they could be active and independent learners. Aids such as computers, libraries and an internet connection can be means that learners use to work on learning without teachers' direct or indirect intervention, and they can also be exploited by teachers to provide learners with opportunities to work on their learning. However, autonomy cannot and should not be restricted to using self-access materials, although they can be one channel through which learners practise their autonomy, as autonomy should not be restricted to certain modes of learning. Moreover, despite Jones's (1995) claim that self-access may not be accommodated in all cultures, specifically non-Western cultures, the participants expressed the importance of such materials, although not necessarily for completely independent use by students but rather under teachers' supervision and guidance.

Therefore, despite the physical situation, I have found that learner autonomy can be facilitated in that there was a great deal of evidence of this. This now leads to the psychological perspective.

5.5.2 Psychological perspective: focus on characteristics of learners and teachers

This aspect refers to the learners' capability and readiness and their attitudes towards taking on learning and to adopting responsible roles in their learning. This also relates to teachers' attitudes and readiness to relinquish control for learners to perform independently or collaboratively in their learning. Findings that relate to this category include students' awareness of their roles as active agents and teachers' awareness of their roles as facilitators of learning for learners. Being aware of what it involves to work as active and independent learners is a salient aspect in learner autonomy and means that students value their taking such active roles in their learning. Therefore, the majority of students' awareness of the importance of adopting participatory, collaborative roles in their leaning and the positive attitudes of most of the teachers towards supporting their students for such roles mark their positive beliefs towards students being responsible for their learning. However, types and degrees of this responsibility are realised in a context-sensitive manner that ensures that teachers keep their face while not depriving learners of opportunities to be autonomous.

5.5.3 Socio-cultural perspectives I and II: focus on mediated learning

This aspect concerns the findings about the participants' views and practices of collaboration. Most of the students prefer to learn by working together and collaborating rather than working in isolation. Similarly, teachers mostly are in favour of learners being active and allowed to take control of their learning. It also relates to what seems to be an appropriate form of autonomy in the cultural context of the study. This aspect accommodates the form of autonomy that questions the individualistic nature of learning on the part of learners, and privileges the relationship that is imprinted with cooperation and collaboration between the more capable and the less capable, in line with Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD. Therefore, the

relevance of this perspective to the findings of the current study springs from its recognition both of the context in which learning takes place and the mediated nature of relationships, interaction and collaboration within this context in its socio-cultural II version. Socio-cultural I focuses on the individual exercising autonomy within a certain context. Therefore, it covers both the learners and the context in which learning takes place.

The type of relationship prevalent between the 'more capable', i.e. teachers, and the 'less capable', i.e. students, was one of guiding and facilitating, where learners are assisted in the transfer to gradually maintaining more responsibility for their learning. The aid provided by the 'more capable' functions as a form of scaffolding to enable learners towards assuming more control of their learning. Therefore, one of the aspects in which autonomy is realised in the context of this study might be called here 'socio-cultural' after Oxford's (2003) term. This is because it emphasises the important means through which participants exercise autonomy in their learning.

5.5.4 Political-critical perspective: focus on ideologies, access, and power structures

Here, I present findings pertaining to how participants exercise power and how the power relations are balanced in the exercise of autonomy. It is important to point out here that power relations are valued differently in different cultures; this is what made it important to search for contextual realisations of autonomy in the Libyan context, that is, realisations that respect power relations and structures.

One of the findings in this regard in the context of the study pertains to the education system hierarchy: the relationship between education policy makers and implementers, between inspectors and teachers, and between head-teachers and teachers. Generally speaking, teachers sometimes consider themselves authorities exercising power over learners while teachers themselves are subservient in the hierarchical system of education. In the exercise of power, some teachers adopt authoritative roles, depriving learners of opportunities to be responsible for their learning. This appeared to be because of different powerful constraints working on them such as attempts to satisfy inspectors and meet school requirements such as

covering materials, as well a lack of training for these teachers to modernise their methods of teaching.

Nonetheless, with such participants valuing cooperation and collaboration, there was an autonomy-friendly sort of relationship and atmosphere created in classrooms. That is, teachers and learners are generally questioning what seemed to be established power structures in the classroom. This tends not to be because of the political ideology as they were sometimes unaware of what the policy advocates, rather they learn and teach in ways that they believe in and see to be appropriate. Therefore, they show a high level of agency. This realisation of autonomy within the context of the study should be distanced from individualistic types of autonomy in order for it to fit in the context of this study. This is because 'contextual adversities such as ethnic oppression are not necessarily insuperable barriers to claiming personal power and mental autonomy' (Oxford, 2003, p. 89), and 'cultural differences may not be the main barrier to the promotion of the concept of autonomy in countries with a group-oriented tradition' (Esch, 1996, p. 46).

5.6 Reflections on the research questions

Through asking the questions in this study, I aimed to investigate the participants' perceptions and practices in relation to learner autonomy. By investigating the participants' perceptions, interpretations and practices in learning and teaching and their roles and each others' roles, I wanted to understand the modes that they follow in learning and teaching from the perspective of students being in control of their learning. Therefore, the findings are interpreted and related to the concept of learner autonomy.

Because of the difficulty of understanding what lies behind participants' behaviours, I tried to intensify the investigation by, for example, following observation sessions by questions to participants so they could reflect on their behaviours and disambiguate things for me. I can say that the research questions were responded to successfully and appropriately. However, the degree to which I responded to the different questions of the research might not be equal. This especially applies to question three which deals with education policy and the participants' understanding

and perceptions about it. I believe that this aspect should have been investigated more deeply by finding the perceptions and views of policy-makers in the context of the study. However, this is not as easy as it may seem as it is not possible to find who really is responsible for determining education policy aspects.

5.7 Contribution of the study

The study presented evidence that autonomy is not an alien concept within the Libyan context and that practices reflecting autonomous behaviour by participants in this context were clearly observed. Therefore, the study showed how learner autonomy has its place in one of the cultures that are usually perceived as being incompatible with autonomy, and participants were to a large degree capable of active agency in their learning and teaching. In this, this study supports Littlewood's (2001) findings of his study that individual differences rather than cultural limitations affect the exercise of autonomy and its realisation in different cultures.

The study also showed that constraints do play a role in facilitating or limiting learner autonomy and therefore conditioned the realisation of autonomy in the Libyan context. For example, a number of students noted that providing computers, an internet connection and a library are all important to enable them to be responsible for their learning. Similarly, most teachers pointed out that insufficient time with classes determines their modes of working on lessons and limits opportunities for students to work autonomously. However, the constraints within the Libyan context as this study suggests are mostly external constraints relating, for example, to lack of teaching and learning aids and inflexibility of exam dates, rather than to internal constraints that spring from participants themselves, which would have erected barriers in the face of implementing autonomous learning if they had been present. Indeed, one of the important contributions to knowledge of this study is that participants worked in a way that seemed to challenge prevalent beliefs about their roles (e.g. roles of teachers and learners as perceived by proponents of dichotomies of individualist and collectivist and low and high power societies). That is, it was found that in spite of constraints that limited the participants' opportunities to work according to their preferred modes of learning and teaching, these participants

exercised a great deal of autonomy and found their ways of working according to their desired modes of learning and teaching. Learners showed considerable readiness to take control of their learning and to work autonomously, mostly in collaboration with each other and with teachers. Teachers also created an autonomy-friendly atmosphere and allowed space for their learners to work actively and to take responsibility for their learning.

In regard to the presumed mismatch between education policy and classroom practices, many of the participants suggested that policy needed to be developed to encourage students to be more active in lessons. However, this revealed that these participants who suggested that education policy needs to be developed were unaware of the policy, as in fact their practices and beliefs were to a large degree in accord with the terms of education policy which did encourage the idea of learners being responsible for their learning. This was reflected in the ways in which lessons were implemented and relationships were built that provided learners with opportunities and spaces to manoeuvre (Jiménez Raya et al., 2007), and to take control of their learning. This was also apparent in teachers allowing learners to be active and to take control of aspects of learning. However, for a few participants, this mismatch was true. These participants were mainly in favour of teachers being in control and learners being passive in classes. This is very probably attributed to older methods of teaching, which the teachers themselves experienced when they were learners as well as their lack of awareness of newer teaching methods. This demonstrates the importance of providing teachers and inspectors with updated teaching and teacher-assessment methods courses, raising their awareness of different modes of teaching and the feasibility of allowing learners opportunities to be in control of their learning as well as of education policy itself.

Also, the study demonstrated that the concept of autonomy is grounded in the socio-cultural context of the study and is not alien; it is rather being practised in a contextually appropriate manner. Therefore, the study emphasises that autonomy should be understood locally in its socio-cultural milieu. The contributions of the study may also be summarised as follow:

5.7.1 Collaboration

The study showed the importance of collaboration as one aspect of learners' exercise of their rights and playing active roles in learning. This collaboration proved to be a preferable mode of learning in the context of this study. It serves to show that learner autonomy does not mean working individually, rather autonomy means here, as it was evident, that collaboration and group work are very important ways for learners to be in control of their learning. Therefore, the study refutes the claims that autonomy refers to working individually.

5.7.2 Scaffolding

Scaffolding was shown to be a significant mode for consolidating learners to be responsible for their learning. As it might be argued for as a positive aspect for instilling autonomy in learners, scaffolding proved to be a very successful procedure for drawing learners' attention to the importance of being active agents in learning, encouraging them and providing them with opportunities to be responsible for their learning. Therefore, it showed the importance of the teachers' role in fostering learner autonomy in their learners, and that learner autonomy does not refer to leaving learners to learn on their own.

5.7.3 Cultural sensitivity

The study showed that for autonomy to be appropriate in a certain culture, i.e. in order not to be accused of being an alien concept, it must be exercised in accordance with cultural milieu of that context. Therefore, without taking into consideration and respecting that context, autonomy would rather be seen as an alien concept being forced on learners and teachers. Thus, autonomy should be considered locally to the socio-cultural context where it is to be fostered.

5.7.4 Autonomy peculiarity

The study also found that autonomy has peculiar realisation to the context of this study, which might be different from other, perhaps even close or similar contexts. For example, this study showed considerable appreciation by participants of collaboration and group work. Therefore, it supports statements that autonomy has different forms as well as degrees and that it should not be confined to certain practices and should be open to different interpretations and realisations.

5.8 Implications for policy

I present here a number of issues that rose as problematic to allowing appropriate implementation of learning and teaching from the participants' opinions and practices. These are supported by statements from literature and findings from studies in the context of the current study in order to enhance the trustworthiness of this study.

It was evident that the top down management of education has significant influences on the performance of teachers and learners. Some teachers and learners were unaware of education policy aspects that call for allowing learners responsibility for their learning. Moreover, they are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy with the expectations of implementing the decisions issued by the Secretariat of Education through posing dates and layouts of exams, authority of inspectors and head-teachers (This conclusion is also supported by Eidweni, 2012). The policy-making practice is centralised with officials on top of the hierarchy. Therefore, teachers should be involved in the design of curriculum and the making of education policy (c.f. Shihiba, 2011), and it is highly important that education policy making be decentralised (c.f. Eidweni, 2012). Also, teachers, head-teachers and inspectors should be familiarised with education policy terms that encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning and they should be given courses to modernise their modes and perceptions of teaching and learning.

One result of the top-down education policy hierarchy is the teacher-inspector relationship (Shihiba, 2011). Their relationship is normally imprinted by formality

and high reverence to inspectors by teachers. This is mainly because inspectors normally assess teachers on the amount of materials covered and on the preparation of students to exams. Therefore, teachers' performance is directed towards pleasing inspectors, disregarding its feasibility to learners (cf. Shihiba, 2011). Therefore, training sessions of modern inspection methods should be provided to inspectors in order to equip them with modern ways that allow them to help teachers and evaluate them on the grounds of their performance rather than on the amount of materials covered and preparing students for exams (Findings by Eidweni, 2012; and Shihiba, 2011 confirm this finding and suggest similar recommendations).

Another issue that is tied to the centralised education policy is the examination system. Being highly centralised with the examination department controlling the dates and content of exams, teachers and schools are deprived of freedom to decide dates or content of exams for their students. The implication of this is that the aspiration of teachers is ultimately directed to covering the materials before the exams dates. Unless they do so, they will be blamed by several parties such as head-teachers and inspectors. In this, teachers struggle to cover the prescribed material in the time allotted (c.f. Eidweni, 2012; Shihiba, 2011; Alhmali, 2007), which the teachers in this study described as insufficient. Therefore, this can affect their implementation of lessons and their behaviour with students particularly in terms of confining work on lessons to themselves. Literature supports this with evidence that implementing certain modes of teaching and learning (e.g. communicative approach) can be considerably limited by shortage of time, especially in contexts where teachers are perceived under pressure for preparing their students for internal or external exams (Carless, 2003). Also, the majority of participants noted that time of lessons is not sufficient. Therefore, as most of the teachers emphasised, time of classes should be increased in number or length of lessons.

The lack of teaching and learning aids that can help teachers provide opportunities for learners and help them work on their learning more autonomously also limited these parties' potentials (Eidweni, 2012; and Shihiba, 2011 confirm this finding). Therefore, teaching and learning aids should be provided so that teachers and

learners can have more opportunities to work on their lessons according to their preferences and more autonomously.

There were some teachers who seemed to follow traditional teaching methods which often emphasise teachers' control in the class and leave learners helpless. Therefore, lack of training and awareness-raising for teachers of the importance of modern teaching methods was an important factor in determining the types of teaching methods followed by some teachers. Some participants mentioned only one course they have attended that was arranged by the Secretary of Education. This one was after the regime change in Libya. Unless teachers are provided with training and courses for developing their modes of teaching, they will very likely continue with the methods they employ, which are to some extent derived from their experience; i.e., teach-as-has-been-taught ways of teaching (cf. Elhensheri, 2004). This conclusion is emphasised by Little (1991) that it will likely be difficult for teachers who received education and training through expository modes to switch to roles of counsellors and facilitators of learning to their learners. Therefore, teachers should receive training in how they adopt roles of mediators, counsellors, facilitators and organisers of learning for their learners (Little, 1995).

One of the significant findings of the study is the usefulness and effectiveness of scaffolding students' learning in order to provide opportunities to learn more independently of teachers. This was a characteristic of a number of classes and teachers. Therefore, this could be one of the issues that makers and implementers of education policy should pay attention to and emphasise during making and implementing education policy, both on macro levels of socio-cultural contexts and micro levels; that is, on the level of schools and classrooms, as well as integrating it into teacher training courses for teachers.

5.9 Implications for developing context-idiosyncratic autonomy

The findings of the study suggest a contextualised version of autonomy that accommodates the needs and nature of the Libyan context. In this, rather than adopting a comparative attitude towards judging the validity of autonomy for this context against other contexts, I approached the context with a tabula rasa; that is

looking at 'the familiar as strange' (Holliday, 2007a, p. 68). This is in order to gain an interpretive, truthful, unprejudiced and insightful picture of the situation.

This research has provided evidence that the concept of learner autonomy is relevant and realised in this Libyan school. Learner autonomy has sometimes been described as invalid for some contexts, but this research suggests that its definition and form should be widened in order to accommodate diverse cultural contexts and for it to cease to be considered confined to particular contexts. Therefore, understanding the realisation of autonomy in a certain context and attempting to foster it should be approached from two angles: the first is the overall or macro context referring to the cultural context, while the second is the small or micro context represented in the classroom. This involves a thorough investigation of contexts within which autonomy is to be fostered, rather than assuming that autonomy is valid or invalid. Therefore, appropriate styles for fostering autonomy should be sought within the incubating context in order to respond to the question 'how might the classroom be transformed into a learning environment that facilitates the promotion of autonomy?' (Ho and Crookall, 1995, p. 235), rather than assuming the exclusiveness of autonomy to certain cultures and its invalidity in others. Therefore, this study supports calls to understand autonomy in its socio-cultural context (e.g. Little, 1999) and widen it to be valid for different modes of learning. For autonomy to be valid in diverse cultural contexts, an autonomy-friendly environment must be created, which respects the culture of the teachers and learners and their backgrounds. That is, a form of autonomy that accommodates their cultural practices.

5.9.1 Contextual dimensions of learner autonomy

One of the arguments for autonomy to be validated in diverse cultures is opening the concept to different versions, both in forms and degrees. That is, allowing its variability to accommodate different cultures and to fit different learners' and teachers' readiness to take on autonomy. Therefore, autonomy should be understood locally in diverse contexts and the idiosyncrasy of different cultures in valuing the promotion of autonomy should be respected. Esch (2009) heeded the call to develop models of autonomy that respect the context where autonomy is to be fostered.

Otherwise, attempts for promoting autonomy without being aware of cultural differences and without first recognising the uniqueness of different contexts as well as individuals would result either in 'inappropriate pedagogies', or 'cultural impositions' (Pennycook, 1997, p. 44). Therefore, in order to allow learners their rights to exercise autonomy, and to allow autonomy to be as open and accommodating as it should be, Lamb (2005) advises that rather than be 'constrained by definitions, ... [we] must remain sensitive and open to individual circumstances and contexts'; 'must follow the scent rather than look for the specific' and 'must try to understand how elements of autonomy manifest themselves in individuals' (p. 83). According to this study in a Libyan school, the requirement for moving towards understanding autonomy universally is to strip it from the individualistic nature that is sometimes attached to it.

5.9.2 Dismissing individualism

Individualist approaches to the promotion of autonomy deny its appropriateness to different cultures and sometimes restrict it to Western cultures where it is claimed to have originated. Therefore, in attempts to foster it, the concept of autonomy should not relate exclusively to individualism. Rather, the recognition of collaborative notions of learning should be an integral component to instilling autonomy. Educators, teachers or policy makers wishing to introduce or develop autonomy in their learners should distance the concept from the shell of individualism. Within the context of this study, findings have shown that a form of autonomy that values opportunities for learners to collaborate, cooperate and work together, rather than individually, proved to be desirable and relevant.

5.9.3 Collaborative modes of learning to foster autonomy

One of the ways in which autonomy can be fostered is through employing or at least allowing collaborative work to take place in classrooms and between students as well as with teachers. The use of collaboration to develop autonomy in learners might best be introduced gradually, where learners are allowed to collaborate and work together on their learning by providing for them an appropriate environment to exercise this

approach. This facilitates in learners an independence from teachers and gradually encourages them to depend on each other and then on themselves. Scaffolding and passing control to learners gradually have proved to be effective for involving learners in working actively on their learning and performing autonomously in the context of this study.

5.10 Limitations of the study

In this study, I aimed to provide one aspect of a truth, and this was the reason for employing qualitative, ethnographic research methods for data collection and analysis. However, employing qualitative methods alone in this study might be seen as a limitation. The reason for not employing quantitative approaches is that they 'distance the investigator from the context and hide cultural assumptions within webs of abstraction and generalization' (Oxford, 2003, p. 91). Therefore, Oxford (2003) suggests employing qualitative and quantitative approaches for investigation and argues that qualitative methodologies alone are not enough because their 'results cannot easily be generalised' (p. 91). However, it is not the tendency of qualitative research to generalise results of studies; rather, it aims to provide in-depth investigations. This allows for approaching different contexts and even micro-contexts such as a school and therefore retains the idiosyncrasies of different contexts which might not be attainable by providing quantitative data.

Moreover, other research techniques might approach the research population individually, risk separating them from their community and stripping their views towards autonomy from the overall surroundings and community. This would result in the research providing individualistic perceptions of autonomy that are 'not compatible with the view that autonomous individuals were the creative products of their social contexts' (Esch, 2009, p. 42).

The other limitation I perceived in this study is that it targeted a small population of participants within its context. However, again, it is the tendency of qualitative research methods to focus on small samples and look for a deep understanding of them.

5.11 Future research

As most teachers and students pointed out and complained about a number of constraints that seemed to limit their employment of their preferred teaching and learning modes, it might be useful to study participants in an environment that meets their requirements. They could then be approached to see whether their behaviours and views have changed and therefore we could observe the effects of such provisions on these participants' behaviours and beliefs. However, given that the constraints are deeply embedded in educational structures, such research is not likely to be possible in the short term.

Some studies about the context of this study suggest that teachers are, to some extent, seen as providers of knowledge and as authorities, and learners are expected to show reverence and obedience (c.f. Alhmali, 2007). However, findings of this study show that learners enjoy a degree of negotiation and collaboration in their lessons both with teachers and other learners, though retaining such respect for teachers as know-alls. Also, the findings of this study show there was considerable practice and considerably positive attitudes to allowing learners opportunities to work on their learning and valuation to work as such by students (Findings of a study by Eidweni, 2012 confirm this conclusion). Therefore, similar research might be carried out in other institutes and in other cultural contexts to avoid stereotyping culture and autonomy, to facilitate understanding the concept of autonomy and to help generalising the results to wider contexts.

Also, as the education policy with its top-down hierarchy seemed to influence the education process in this context considerably, a study that traces the policy-makers' and policy-making agenda might provide insights to better understand the education process in Libya, and the place of autonomy in education policy, which can then provide more insights about the perceived mismatch between theory and practice in this context.

Moreover, many of the teachers in this study have found ways of overcoming some of the constraints on autonomy, and of offering learners opportunities to work

autonomously. It would therefore be useful to facilitate collaborative action research with teachers to see how they may find additional strategies.

5.12 Reflections as a researcher

In this section, I present a background about myself and career and what prospects I believe this study can provide and how they might be disseminated.

I have worked as a teacher in different levels, preparatory, secondary and university levels. I normally tried to allow learners opportunities to be responsible for their learning. This was sometimes appreciated with considerable involvement and participation from students, while at other times students showed a kind of disinterest in being responsible and taking control of their learning. In some cases, this led me to perceive modes of teaching and learning which offer students opportunities to be active, responsible learners as inappropriate in the context of this study. After conducting this study, I now understood that it is more of individual differences between students than their resistance to such modes of teaching and learning that are responsible for the acceptance or resistance of autonomy.

Now that I have myself had deeper views and insights from people inside the context and was able to have an outsider/insider's look into the context and listened to people, I have been convinced that learners are more powerful than I perhaps ever thought they could be. The experience I have gone through inside the case study school made me confident that whatever constraints there could be, teachers and learners can create and innovate atmospheres in order to teach and learn according to their desirable and preferred ways. However, this research demonstrated that several constraints have affected the modes of teaching and learning that teachers and learners followed. This research, therefore, can be employed in order to avoid such constraints or lessen their influence on the participants. The findings obtained can be disseminated in a way that draws attention of policy makers, teachers, curriculum designers, inspectors and head-teachers for working on allowing learners the opportunities and creating for them the environment in which they can be more autonomous and responsible for their learning. Therefore, autonomy might be made an integral part of courses for teachers-to-be at university; teachers at schools might

be given courses for adopting more modern methods of teaching and learner autonomy-supportive modes of teaching, and encouraged to use scaffolding and modes of teaching to provide learners with opportunities to be active and autonomous in their learning.

5.13 Conclusion

In this study I explored the realisation of autonomy in a socio-cultural context through investigating the practices and opinions of participants within their setting. The realisation of autonomy within the context of this study proved to have its own idiosyncratic forms, dependent upon the socio-cultural notions around it. The autonomy these participants exercised was a reflection of their beliefs and preferences, though constraints that had influences on their behaviours and beliefs should be recognised. The uniqueness of autonomy within this context showed that autonomy does come in various degrees and forms rather than being a ready-made recipe for all, where, as Littlewood (2001) notes, it is individual differences among learners rather than cultures that should be referred to in the claims of appropriateness or inappropriateness of autonomy.

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Appendix A

Ethics information sheet

1.Research Project Title: An Ethnographic Investigation into Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions and Practices in Relation to Learner Autonomy in a Secondary School in Libya

Dear participant:

2.Invitation paragraph

My name is Abdallah Elmahjoub and I am a PhD student in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Sheffield. You are being invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand what the research is about, why it is being done and what it will involve. In this research I am interested in looking at how learning and teaching is carried out, your roles in this, what you think about language teaching and learning and your beliefs about your roles and what you do, would like to do and/or what you think you have to do to help you learn better.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Contact details: Abdallah Elmahjoub.

  Phone number:

  email: edp09aae@sheffield.ac.uk

My supervisor: Dr. Terry Lamb: t.lamb@sheffield.ac.uk

3.What is the project's purpose?

This research intends to find out what teachers and learners do when teaching and learning, the type of relationship between them, their views about teaching and learning and about what they think good teachers and learners do or should do. This is mainly to see firstly how learners learn and how they behave, and then how freely and independently they work. The research will probably extend from 20th October to 10th January.

4.Why have I been chosen?

I have chosen your class for the research because you are at level where you can express your opinions and can decide what you like or not and what you think is suitable or not for you in learning and teaching. The number of participants will be about 30 students, and about 12 teachers.

5.Do I have to take part?

Although I hope you will agree to take part in the project, participation is completely voluntary. So you can decide to take part or not and it is completely acceptable. Also, you can withdraw from participating at any point in time if you choose not to continue without needing to give a reason for withdrawing. Refusing to participate or withdrawing at any time will involve NO penalty or benefits. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason.

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

There are two methods of research for the project. The first consists of observations which will extend for about two months, and there will also be interviews with teachers and with students. I need to attend classes and ask you (teachers and students) questions so as to clarify any unclear points. These will be followed by about twenty or thirty-minute interviews to check that my understanding of the observations is accurate, and to supplement them by finding out what you have to say about teaching and learning. If possible, I would like to record the observation and

interview sessions, provided you give your consent. The audio recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and for illustration for the purpose of this project and perhaps for publications. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

Data from interviews and observations will be kept securely, will NOT affect in any way your grades or marks and will be destroyed after finishing the project.

7.What do I have to do?

If you agree to take part in the project, you will continue to attend your classes as usual, and attend interviews at times which are convenient to you. However, if you notice that you are uncomfortable or would like to withdraw, it is possible without any consequences.

8.What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There will not be any discomfort, harm or disadvantages to you. However, if you feel you are not comfortable or wish to withdraw for any other reason, you can withdraw without any consequences for you.

9.What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will provide understanding of how teaching and learning take place and help learners and teachers employ more modern strategies and activities.

10.What if something goes wrong?

In case you are unhappy with any activity involved in the project, you can contact the researcher or the supervisor and explain.

Researcher: Abdallah Elmahjoub, edp09aae@sheffield.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr. Terry Lamb, t.lamb@sheffield.ac.uk

11. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. Names of all participants and the school will not be included but will be replaced by alternative names that will not allow the participants or school to be identified.

12. Who is organising and funding the research?

This research project is sponsored by the Cultural Department in the Libyan Embassy in the U.K.

13. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This research project has been approved by the School of Education Ethics Committee in the University of Sheffield.

14. Additional information:

In case you need further information, wish to voice any concerns in relation to your participation in the project, you can contact me or the supervisor. Contact details are provided above.

You will be given a copy of this information sheet and if you would like, you can obtain from me (the researcher) a copy of the signed consent form.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks and gratitude for your cooperation.

Signature: Abdallah Elmahjoub

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

Title of Project: An Ethnographic Investigation into Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions and Practices in Relation to Learner Autonomy in a Secondary School in Libya

Name of Researcher: Abdallah Elmahjoub

Participant Identification Number for this project:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information letter
    dated ....for the above project and have had the
    opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any
    time without giving any reason. If you need help or would like to withdraw at any
    time , you can contact the researcher:

    edp09aae@sheffield.ac.uk

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis.
    I give permission for members of the research team to have access
    to my anonymised responses.

4. I agree to take part in the above research project.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature
(*or legal representative*)

__ Abdallah Elmahjoub _____   ___03.09.2012___
Name of person taking consent   Date   Signature
(*if different from lead researcher*)
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

__ Abdallah Elmahjoub ___   _03.09.2012___
 Lead Researcher   Date   Signature
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies*:*

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy for the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.

Appendix C

Appendix D

Observation   (   ).   Class   (   ).   Teacher   ....

Date:..................Time:....................

	Q.N	S-q	Theme	
1	1	B.	time and length of lessons,	
2	1, 2.	A.B. A.B.	description of the classroom,	

3	1, 2	B., A.B.	arrangement of seating,	
4	1, 2	B., A.B.	number of students,	
5	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	teacher's position in the classroom,	

6	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	materials and equipment teachers and learners use,	
7	1, 2	A.B, A.B.	level of students,	

8	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	teacher's style in teaching,	

9	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	what sort of activities teachers use, and how students react to these, e.g. whether they take part or withdraw from them,	

1 0	1, 2	B., A.B.	how English is used in the classroom by the teacher and students, i.e. how much the teacher speaks in English and in Arabic, how he/she behaves with students,	

11	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	the length of time the teacher and the students speak in the class,	
12	1, 2	B., A.B.	what teachers mostly focus on,	

1 3	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	level of teachers' encouragement to students,	

1 4	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	students' movements,	
1 5	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	their interruption to the teacher,	

1 6	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	the degree of their participation and initiation of talks and activities,	
1 7	1, 2	B., A.B .	their ability to express their wants, preferences and needs to the teacher and the teachers' attitudes to these,	

18	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	what behaviour they exhibit,	
19	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	whether and how often teachers allow students to participate and their attitudes towards students' participation,	

2 0	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	Whether and how often the teacher engages students in independent activities,	

2 1	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	Whether, how and how often the teacher trains and prepares students for independent learning outside classroom (lifelong learning),	

2 2	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	the teacher's readiness to allow learners choices in lessons and to listen to their opinions,	

2 3	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	creating spaces for students to work independently,	

2 4	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	the degree of teachers' control of lessons,	

2 5	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	teachers' and learners' content with the situation in class,	

2 6	1, 2	A.B. A.B.	and how each side shows tolerance and welcomes initiative from the other side.	

Appendix E

TEACHERS FIRST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS. 30 Qs

Teacher:... Date:........................... Time:...................

1	Can you describe what you do in an everyday lesson? How do you start the lesson? Do you introduce the topic and explain to students? Or do you elicit information from them and warm them up and indulge them in discussion? Do you assign them any kind of activities?
2	What teaching method do you use? What affects your choice?
3	How do you see your students? Passive or active? On what basis?
4	What roles should the teacher and students each have?
5	Do your students prefer you do work or do they prefer to work themselves?
6	Do learners initiate talks? If yes, how do you react?
7	Do you ask students' opinions of what to do in classroom?
8	Do you think your students are inclined to individual work or group work in doing tasks and exercises?
9	Do you help your students if they have difficulties? How?
10	What do they usually do when they have difficulty or do not understand?
11	Do you prefer the student who waits till you do everything or the one who takes part in learning and works along with you?
12	If you feel that students are not interested in the topic, do you change it?
13	Do you allow your students to discuss things with you or with colleagues and

	state their opinions or suggestions about lessons, homework, group work, etc.?
14	Do you mark students' homework or do students ever evaluate their own and each others' work?
15	Do students interrupt you in classroom, ask for help? How often? Or are they hesitant? How do you find it?
16	What activities do you focus on most? Peer work? Collective work? Directed by you? Why?
17	Do you encourage them to work independently of you or not? How and Why?
18	Do you try to engage your students in working independently and/ or collaboratively?
19	Do you think doing all explanation by the teacher is better for you and your students? Why?
20	If students express desire to work on their own, how do you behave with them? Do you allow them opportunities or not? Why?
21	Can you think of any factors that affect your way of teaching? How do they relate to allowing learners independence in their learning?
22	What kind of activities do your students usually prefer? Independent ones or led by you?
23	What do you focus on most in your teaching?
24	Do you work on making your students independent in learning in school?
25	Do you work on making your students continue learning after finishing school?
26	Do you think you are influenced by how you were taught in the way you teach, that is do you think you teach the way your teachers taught you in the past? To what extent, why?

27	In your opinion, are there any cultural influences on your way of teaching and allowing or not allowing students independence in their learning?
28	Do you think/feel your students agree/are happy with the way you teach?
29	What was the most important part of the interview for you? Why?
30	Would you like to add anything before we finish?

TEACHERS SECOND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS. 31 Qs

Teacher:... Date:........................... Time:...................

1	What teaching method do you use? What affects your choice?
2	What features do you think a good learner has? Why?
3	How do you describe a good language learning environment?
4	How do you see your students? Passive or active? On what basis?
5	What roles should the teacher and students each have?
6	Do your students prefer you do work or do they prefer to work themselves?
7	Do learners initiate talks? If yes, how do you react?
8	Do you ask students' opinions of what to do in classroom?
9	Do you think your students are inclined to individual work or group work in doing tasks and exercises?
10	Do you help your students if they have difficulties? How?
11	What do they usually do when they have difficulty or do not understand?
12	If you feel that students are not interested in the topic, do you change it?
13	Do you allow your students to discuss things with you or with colleagues and state their opinions or suggestions about lessons, homework, group work, etc.?
14	Do you mark students' homework or do students ever evaluate their own and each others' work?
15	Do students interrupt you in classroom, ask for help? How often? Or are they hesitant? How do you find it?

16	What activities do you focus on most? Peer work? Collective work? Directed by you? Why?
17	Do you encourage your students to work independently of you or not? How and Why?
18	Do you try to engage your students in working independently and/ or collaboratively? How do you find this? How do they react?
19	Do you think doing all explanation by the teacher is better for you and your students? Why?
20	If students express desire to work on their own, how do you behave with them? Do you allow them opportunities or not? Why?
21	Can you think of any factors that affect your way of teaching? How do they relate to allowing learners independence in their learning?
22	What kind of activities do your students usually prefer? Independent ones or led by you?
23	Who do you think should be mainly responsible for what happens in the teaching-learning process; the teacher or students? Why?
24	What do you think of allowing students control over their learning and independence from the teacher? Do you create atmosphere to allow/help students to work independently?
25	Do you work on making your students independent in learning in school?
26	Do you work on making your students continue learning after finishing school?
27	Do you think you are influenced by how you were taught in the way you teach, that is do you think you teach the way your teachers taught you in the past? To what extent, why?

28	In your opinion, are there any cultural influences on your way of teaching and allowing or not allowing students independence in their learning?
29	Do you think/feel your students agree/are happy with the way you teach?
30	What was the most important part of the interview for you? Why?
31	Would you like to add anything before we finish?

TEACHERS THIRD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS. 28 Qs.

Teacher:.. Date:........................... Time:...................

1	What teaching method do you use? What affects your choice?
2	Do you ask students' opinions of what to do in classroom?
3	What do they usually do when they have difficulty or do not understand?
4	Do you prefer the student who waits till you do everything or the one who takes part in learning and works along with you?
5	If you feel that students are not interested in the topic, do you change it?
6	Do you use the textbooks only or use other materials? Why? If yes, give me examples please?
7	Do you allow your students to discuss things with you or with colleagues and state their opinions or suggestions about lessons, homework, group work, etc.?
8	Do you mark students' homework or do they ever evaluate their own and each others' work?
9	Do you encourage them to work independently of you or not? How and Why?
10	Can you think of any factors that affect your way of teaching? How do they relate to allowing learners independence in their learning?
11	How is 'being responsible' looked at in your culture?
12	What kind of activities do your students usually prefer? Independent ones or led by you?
13	What do you focus on most in your teaching?

14	Who do you think should be mainly responsible for what happens in the teaching-learning process; the teacher or students? Why?
15	What do you think of allowing students control over their learning and independence from the teacher? Do you create atmosphere to allow/help students to work independently?
16	How do you describe an autonomous learner?
17	Do you think your learners are autonomous/ are responsible for their learning? Why?
18	What do you think a learner should do to be responsible for learning, autonomous?
19	What do you think you should do to be autonomous and help your learners be autonomous?
20	Do you think you are influenced by how you were taught in the way you teach, that is do you think you teach the way your teachers taught you in the past? To what extent, why?
21	In your opinion, are there any cultural influences on your way of teaching and allowing or not allowing students independence in their learning?
22	Do you think there is a relationship between learners taking responsibility for their learning, be autonomous learners and culture?
23	Do you think/feel your students agree/are happy with the way you teach?
24	After the change in the regime of the country, do you think there will be change in the education policy?
25	What do you think affects the education policy?
26	If there is change, how would you like it to be? In what aspects of education?

27	What was the most important part of the interview for you? Why?
28	Would you like to add anything before we finish?

Student:... Date:.......................... Time:..................

1	Can you please describe your role in an everyday lesson? Are you satisfied with that? Why? What do you think affects your role? What do you think should change?
2	How do you find the seating arrangement in the classroom?
3	Does your teacher praise you when you answer questions and show that you follow what he says? or when you show ability to think and work on your own?
4	Does your teacher allow you to discuss tasks and work in pairs and in groups?
5	If you need help from the teacher, do you ask the teacher for that? Does the teacher help or not? How? Why do you think?
6	Does your teacher tell you the right answer or give you time to try to work it out?
7	What do you think a good teacher does? Why?
8	What do you think that you as a language learner should do? What affects it?
9	Do your teachers encourage you to take responsibility of your learning? Why? How, if yes?
10	Do you evaluate your and each others' work? Or does the teacher do that? How often?
11	Do you discuss things with teachers outside classroom? How do teachers react if you ask for discussion outside class?
12	Do you prefer being free to learn what you want and when and how you want? Or do you prefer the teacher prepares materials and tells you what to study and

	how to study? How do you think this affects your learning?
13	Do you check your progress in learning? How?
14	Do you contribute in discussions with teacher and other students in the classroom?
15	Do you work on your own and with colleagues in learning outside classroom? Can you give me examples?
16	Do you and your colleagues design or choose activities and tasks to do? Or does the teacher do?
17	If you need help from the teacher, do you ask for that? Does the teacher help or not? How? Why do you think?
18	Do you think you will learn better or not if you work in pairs and groups? Why?
19	Do you think you are free to learn and study the way you like and prefer or not? To what extent? What affects that?
20	Do you think you will learn better if you are free to learn what you want and how you want?
21	How do you think being free to learn will affect your learning?
22	Can you think of any difficulties that face you to be more independent?
23	Do you depend on the teacher in everything or do you learn by yourself? To what extent? Give me examples.
24	Do you think you can learn on your own? i.e. independently from teachers? Why (not)? If yes, how?
25	How is 'being responsible' looked at in your culture?
26	Which teacher is better for you; the one who explains everything or the one who asks you to think about how to solve problems, do tasks, and work on lessons

	on your own? Why?
27	What was the most important part of the interview for you? Why?
28	Would you like to add anything before we finish?

STUDENTS SECOND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS. 25 Qs.

Student:.. Date:.......................... Time:..................

1	Does your teacher allow you to discuss tasks and work in pairs and in groups?
2	If you need help from the teacher, do you ask the teacher for that? Does the teacher help or not? How? Why do you think?
2	Does your teacher tell you the right answer or give you time to try to work it out?
3	What do you think a good teacher does? Why?
4	What do you think that you as a language learner should do? What affects it?
	What is the good language learning environment?
5	Do your teachers encourage you to take responsibility of your learning? Why? How, if yes?
6	Do you evaluate your and each others' work? Or does the teacher do that? How often?
7	Do you prefer being free to learn what you want and when and how you want? Or do you prefer the teacher prepares materials and tells you what to study and how to study? How do you think this affects your learning?
8	Do you check your progress in learning? How?
9	Do you contribute in discussions with teacher and other students in the classroom?
10	Do you work on your own and with colleagues in learning outside classroom? Can you give me examples?
11	Do you and your colleagues design or choose activities and tasks to do? Or does the teacher do?

12	If you need help from the teacher, do you ask for that? Does the teacher help or not? How? Why do you think?
13	Do you think you will learn better or not if you work in pairs and groups? Why?
14	Do you think you are free to learn and study the way you like and prefer or not? To what extent? What affects that?
15	Do you think you are free to learn and study WHAT you like and prefer or not? To what extent? What affects that?
16	Do you think you will learn better if you are free to learn what you want and how you want?
17	How do you think being free to learn will affect your learning?
18	Can you think of any difficulties that face you to be more independent?
19	What difficulties do you think there are in being independent or free to learn? What advantages are there you think?
20	How is 'being responsible' looked at in your culture?
21	Which teacher is better for you; the one who explains everything or the one who asks you to think about how to solve problems, do tasks, and work on lessons on your own? Why?
22	Do you consider yourself a self-reliant, independent learner who is responsible for his/her learning? Why (not)?
23	Are there difficulties that do not allow you to be independent of teachers in your learning?
24	What was the most important part of the interview for you? Why?
25	Would you like to add anything before we finish?

STUDENTS THIRD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS. 21 Qs.

Student:... Date:........................... Time:..................

1	What do you think that you as a language learner should do? What affects it?
2	Do your teachers encourage you to take responsibility of your learning? Why? How, if yes?
3	What do you think of the material you study? Are you satisfied with it or not?
4	Do you choose the material or topics you study or not? If not, who decides? What do you think of that?
5	Do you prefer being free to learn what you want and when and how you want? Or do you prefer the teacher prepares materials and tells you what to study and how to study? How do you think this affects your learning?
6	Do you and your colleagues design or choose activities and tasks to do? Or does the teacher do?
7	Do you think you are free to learn and study the way you like and prefer or not? To what extent? What affects that?
8	Do you think you are free to learn and study WHAT you like and prefer or not? To what extent? What affects that?
9	Do you think you will learn better if you are free to learn what you want and how you want?
10	How do you think being free to learn will affect your learning?
11	Can you think of any difficulties that face you to be more independent?

12	What difficulties do you think there are in being independent or free to learn? What advantages are there you think?
13	Do you depend on the teacher in everything or do you learn by yourself? To what extent? Give me examples.
14	How is 'being responsible' looked at in your culture?
15	Which teacher is better for you; the one who explains everything or the one who asks you to think about how to solve problems, do tasks, and work on lessons on your own? Why?
16	Do you consider yourself a self-reliant, independent learner who is responsible for his/her learning? Why (not)?
17	Are there difficulties that do not allow you to be independent of teachers in your learning?
18	Are there difficulties that do not allow you to be independent of teachers in your learning?
19	If there is change, how would you like it to be? In what aspects of education?
20	What was the most important part of the interview for you? Why?
21	Would you like to add anything before we finish?

Appendix F

Teachers 16, 17, 18 interviews questions

1- What teaching method do you use? What affects your choice?
2- What roles should the teacher and students each have?
3- From your experience, do you think students are inclined to individual work or group work in doing tasks and exercises?
4- What kind of activities do students generally prefer? Independent ones or led by you?
5- What activities do you focus on most? Peer work? Collective work? Directed by you? Or others? Why?
6- Do you encourage your students to work independently of you or not? How and Why?
7- Do you think doing all explanation by the teacher is better for you and your students? Why?
8- What do you think of allowing students control over their learning and independence from the teacher? Do you create atmosphere to allow/help students to work independently?
9- Who do you think should be mainly responsible for what happens in the teaching-learning process; the teacher or students? Why?
10- What features do you think a good learner has? Why?
11- How do you see your students? Passive or negative? On what basis?
12- Can you think of any factors that affect your way of teaching? How do they relate to allowing learners independence in their learning?
13- In your opinion, are there any cultural influences on your way of teaching and allowing or not allowing students independence in their learning?
14- How do you think allowing learners responsibility for their learning is perceived in our culture in Libya?
15- Do you think there have been any changes in education over the period after the change in the regime?
16- If there is change, how would you like it to be? In what aspects of education?
17- What do you think of the education policy, do you think teachers, head-teachers local education offices can implement what they see best for students? Or do you think it is centralised and they only have to follow the education policy?
18- You mentioned that you had attended a teacher training course, was it the first time or did you attend such courses before?
19- What was it exactly for? How long was it? Did it influence your way of teaching?

Appendix G

Head-teachers interview questions

1- What do you think of making students or allowing them to be active and responsible for their learning?
2- Do you think this is acceptable in our culture or do you think it is strange and not acceptable?
3- Do you interfere in teachers' modes of teaching and in issues inside classrooms?
4- Do you work on providing teaching aids to teachers and students?
5- If teachers or students complain about lack of facilities or other problems, how do you help?
6- What do you think the inspectors' role should be?
7- Who do you think should be blamed for not covering material in the academic year?
8- Does education policy allow you freedom to decide on issues or plans in the school such as times of exams?
9- Does the Education Secretariat cause any difficulties for you, teachers or students?
10- What do you think of allowing students opportunities to be active and responsible for their learning?
11- Do you think students are better active and responsible for their learning or passive and dependent on their teachers?
12- What do you think of allowing learners to be responsible for their learning?
13- How do you think this is looked at in our culture in Libya?

Appendix H

Inspectors interview questions

1- On inspection visits, what do you normally have in mind? On what basis do you evaluate teachers' performance?

2- Do you have a certain schedule or chick-list for evaluating teachers?

3- What do you think is your contribution in inspection visits?

4- What do you think of allowing learners responsibility in their learning? Do you think students should be allowed to be responsible for their learning or not?

5- Which do you prefer in classrooms: learners active and responsible for their learning or teachers dominant and in control of the class?

6- Which mode of teaching is more feasible in your opinion?

7- How do you think allowing learners to be responsible and independent in learning is perceived in culture in Libya?

8- Do you think there have been changes in modes of teaching and learning over the past ten years or so?

9- Do you think the Education Secretariat allows school staff local education offices chances to decide on issues and plans in schools?

10- Do you think there have been changes in education over the past few years after the regime change in Libya?

11- Have you ever taken a course or training on how to do inspection visit or what to inspect?

Appendix I

Parents interview questions

1- Do you think students should be active in learning or should the teacher be in control, explain and tell students what to do and how?
2- Do you think it is acceptable that learners are responsible for their learning?
3- Do you think the teacher who allows students to work and be active to work on their learning are better or the one who controls the lesson and explains everything to the students?
4- How do you think students should be? Active or not?
5- Do you allow your children to study the specialisation they like and study what they like? Or do you make them study what you want?
6- Do you think teaching nowadays is the same or changed over the years?
7- Do you think teaching and learning changed after the revolution?

The University Of Sheffield.

The School Of Education.

Abdallah Elmahjoub

Head of School

Professor Cathy Nutbrown

Department of Educational Studies

388 Glossop Road

Sheffield S10 2JA

30 October 2012

Telephone: +44 (0114) 222 8081

Fax: +44 (0114) 222 8105
Email: MPhil-PhD@sheffield.ac.uk

Dear Abdallah,

Ethical Review Application: " An Ethnographic Investigation into Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions and Practices in Relation to Learner Autonomy in a Secondary School in Libya."

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project. I am writing to confirm that your application has now been approved.

You can now proceed with your research but we recommend you refer to the reviewers' additional comments (please see attached).

This letter is evidence that your application has been approved and should be included as an Appendix in your final submission.

Good luck with your research.

Yours sincerely

Felicity Gilligan
PG Officer