

# Perceptions and Responsibility of EFL Students' and Teachers' in Developing Autonomous Learning A Case Study of Faculty of Education–University of Dongola

Dr. Salha Sid Ahmed Abdullah

Associate Professor at University  
of Dongola

Prof. Omar Bushara Ahmed

Professor at University of  
Dongola

## Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the perceptions and responsibilities of EFL students and teachers in the development of learner autonomy. Two questionnaires for EFL students and teachers were used to collect the data. Then the SPSS program was used to analyze the data. The results showed that EFL students in this study reported having positive perceptions of autonomous learning and moderate behavior towards learner autonomy, since they tend to place most responsibility of EFL learning on their teachers, there was convergence between the students and teachers' perceptions of taking responsibility of autonomous learning which place most of the responsibility on the teacher. The paper concludes with recommendations for teachers, students and syllabus designers.

**Key words:** LA Learner Autonomy – responsibility – perceptions – EFL students/teachers

تصور ومسؤوليات طلاب وأساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية تجاه تطوير التعلم الذاتي لدى الطلاب  
(دراسة حالة كلية التربية – جامعة دنقلا)

د. صالحه سيد أحمد عبدالله أبوعوف - جامعة دنقلا

أ.د عمر بشارة أحمد بشارة - جامعة دنقلا

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي تصورات ومسؤوليات طلاب وأساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة اجنبية تجاه تطوير التعلم الذاتي للطلاب. تم استخدام استبيان للطلاب وآخر للأساتذة لجمع البيانات. كما تم استخدام برنامج SPSS لتحليل البيانات. تم اختيار عينة قصدية واشتملت على

82 من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية-جامعة دنقلا و25 من أساتذة اللغة الانجليزية. أظهرت النتائج أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة دنقلا لديهم تصورات إيجابية وسلوك معتدل نحو التعلم الذاتي وأنهم يميلون إلى إلقاء معظم مسؤولية تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية على الأساتذة. كما اشارت الدراسة الي تقارب بين تصورات الطلاب والأساتذة في القاء معظم المسؤولية على عاتق أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية. اختتمت الورقة بتوصيات للأساتذة والطلاب ومصممي المناهج الدراسية. كلمات مفتاحية: التعلم الذاتي- مسؤولية - تصورات - طلاب / أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية.

## Introduction

When the COVID-19 pandemic invaded the world, voices were loudened calling for staying at home. In the third world where technology access is not easy, many were calling for autonomous learning. The enquiry of how our students are capable of self-education needs to be answered, and it was highly emergent that our students' readiness, awareness and capability of autonomous learning are to be investigated.

As an English language teacher at the Faculty of Education, I am always concerned with achieving two aims: the first is to optimize and intensify teaching academic subjects that promote the theoretical and practical aspects of learning and teaching English; the second is to develop flexible teaching techniques that can promote learner autonomy which plays the key role in terms of life-long education.

Autonomy is an important construct that must be applied to both teaching profession and language learning since both of them are expected to be improved after formal education process and throughout life. Due to changing role of language teachers, teachers' goal is not only to prepare students for the standardized tests but to make them capable of improving the language beyond classroom and use it for communicative purposes. It is teachers' role to help students learn how to become autonomous learners.

Holec (1980) emphasizes autonomy in language learning as an individual's ability to make the decisions concerning their learning in regard to five developmental components as following:

1. determining the objectives, 2. defining the contents and progressions, 3. selecting methods and techniques to be used 4. monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly 5. evaluating what has been acquired in language learning.

Autonomous learning is a capacity, attribute, and attitude (Holec, 1980; Little, 1991), and can take different forms in different contexts, and to different degrees as a result of the characteristics of each learner. Thus autonomy is not inborn (Holec, 1980), but a natural tendency (Benson, 2001). However, students do not automatically have the ability to be autonomous in their learning. Instead, autonomy is a capacity that needs to be activated and developed. Holec (1980) believes that it is open to all, and learners who lack autonomy are capable of developing it given appropriate conditions and preparation.

Through exercise of shared decision making between learners and teachers, learner autonomy lies between total self-directed learning and traditional learning. Little (1991) suggests that observing students' behaviors will provide evidence of their learning autonomy. Two central features of autonomy can be mentioned (Littlewood, 1999). Firstly, in order to be an autonomous learner, students are expected to take the responsibility of their learning and secondly taking responsibility involves learners in taking ownership of their learning. So it is clear that autonomous learners take an active role in their learning and are able to learn beyond the classroom. Autonomous learning is a co-occurring behavioral syndrome that consists of four factors. These are (a) desire, (b) resourcefulness, (c) initiative, and (d) persistence (Carr, 1999; Derrick, 2001).

There are many factors that influence the development of learner autonomy (Chan,2015). The most important factors are motivation levels, responsibilities, perceptions, beliefs about learning and use of learning strategies which are investigated in this study.

Few studies have been conducted on learner autonomy by

Sudanese researchers, which motivates us to conduct this study. Besides. In Sudan, learner and teacher autonomy have not yet been thoroughly researched and empirical studies are yet scarce in the area of autonomy.

Teachers of autonomous language learners have various roles as facilitators (Scharle & Szabo 2000), resources (Breen & Candlin, 1980), consultants (Gremmo&Abe,1985), counselors (Knowles, 1986), coordinators (Hammond & Collins, 1991), and advisers (Voller, 1997). As teacher roles for autonomous learners get more attention, there is increasing research about the factors that influence learner autonomy and the constituent factors of autonomous learning. However, there is limited amount of research investigating these factors in details. Namely the role of students in taking responsibility of autonomous learning. This research aims to investigate the role of teachers and the perceptions of students in developing students' ability to take responsibility of their own learning. The questions this research addresses are:

1. What are the EFL students' perceptions of developing their autonomous learning at the University of Dongola?
2. What are the EFL students' responsibilities to develop their autonomous learning capacities?
3. What are EFL teachers' responsibilities in developing their students autonomous learning?

EFL students need a great deal of preparation and support before they are comfortable with and able to assume greater responsibility for their learning. Reinders & Cotterall (2000), for example, found from a factor analysis that the most important determinant of success in a self-access center was the degree of preparation the students had received. Previous studies (Jones, 1995; Reinders & Lewis, 2006) pointed that such materials frequently lack the necessary support structures, such as clear instructions or even answer keys, and do not explicitly encourage students to reflect on the learning process. Hurd (1998, 72-73) also emphasizes the impor-

tance of preparation: “if learners are not trained for autonomy, no amount of surrounding them with resources will foster in them that capacity for active involvement and conscious choice, although it might appear to do so”.

### **Statement of the problem**

The fact that the students’ dependency on teachers in learning English instead of depending on their own might be taken as an indication that they lack the necessary skills to learn independently of the teacher which might be either because they are not equipped for autonomous learning or are not encouraged to do so. The researchers conducted this research when they noticed that EFL students do not feel responsible for their learning, i.e. they assign that responsibility to their teachers. They do not show a desire to initiate tasks and manage their own learning; they always need a teacher to make selections, decide on what they should learn, design and run tasks in class, etc. They generally are not enthusiastic to self-study initiations. Thus, this study investigates the students’ responsibility in developing their autonomy when learning EFL. The study also investigates the teachers’ perception of responsibility in developing learner autonomy when they teach English.

## **2. Literature review**

### **Definition of autonomy**

Many researchers (Littlewood 1991) stated that the concept of autonomy is a universal concept that can be interpreted and perceived differently by different contexts. The professional concept of autonomy admits a wide range of meanings which include qualities such as self-rule, self-determination, freedom, independence and self-knowledge.

Holec (1981, p.3) first introduced the definition of autonomy into the educational field and described it as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” and “to take charge of one’s own learning is to have and hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of learning”. Holec’s views about autonomy

have exerted great influence on autonomy research and his initial definition has been considered as a starting point in much subsequent work in relevant fields (Gadner & Miller, 1999). Dickinson (1987) states that autonomy is a situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with their learning and the implementation of those decisions.

It is a well-known fact that developing autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process i.e. conscious monitoring, reflection and decision-making.

Little (1991) considers that fostering autonomy is conditioned by learner's acceptance of responsibility. However, it is observed from previous studies that even for deciding what to learn outside the class, students need to share this responsibility with the teacher, while it should be perceived as their own responsibility.

Littlewood (1999) distinguished between "reactive autonomy" and "proactive" one. He states that the former means someone's ability to assume responsibility initiated by an organism, the teacher or the school curriculum, for example, while the latter refers to individual's full autonomy and capacity to set directions alone without outside help. Thus, to help the students achieve that high level of proactive autonomy, it is safer to adopt a step by step learner training program where the students under the direction of the teacher, the collaboration of peers and the guidance of the curriculum are acquainted with the principles of autonomous learning.

### **Qualities of autonomous learners**

Autonomous learners must have the capacity to determine their own learning, and as such must be responsible for it. Learner autonomy concept is built on Self-determination Theory (SDT) which is a macro theory of human motivation and personality that concerns people's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs. It's concerned with the motivation behind choices people make without external influence and interference.

Holec (1981:4) discussed the qualities of autonomous learners and emphasized planning, the selection of materials, monitoring learning progress and self-assessment. He arguably focused on the mechanics of day-to-day learning management. In contrast, Little (1991) placed psychology at the heart of learner autonomy. Little (2000a: 69) combined Holec's definition with his own: Autonomy in language learning depends on the development and exercise of a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action; autonomous learners assume responsibility for determining the purpose, content, rhythm and method of their learning, monitoring its progress and evaluating its outcomes. Although the relationship between these two aspects of autonomy is not made explicit, the assumption is that the capacity to manage one's own learning depends upon certain underlying psychological capacities.

### **Levels of autonomy**

Due to its complex nature, learner autonomy is perceived and applied differently in different contexts. It also manifests itself in different ways and to different degrees (Cotterall, 1995). A number of writers sought to operationalize the notion that autonomy is a matter of degree. Nunan's (1997: 195) attempt involved a model of five levels of 'learner action' – 'awareness', 'involvement', 'intervention', 'creation' and 'transcendence' – which could inform the sequencing of learner development activities in language textbooks.

These levels also involved dimensions of 'content' and 'process'. At the awareness level, for example, learners would be 'made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the materials', 'identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks', and 'identify their own preferred learning styles/strategies'. At the transcendence level, learners would 'make links between the content of classroom learning and the world beyond' and 'become teachers and researchers'.

While Nunan's model remained within the framework of language learning. Benson (2001) states that his attempt to model levels of learner autonomy involved dimensions of control over language learning and teaching processes grouped under three main headings – learning management, cognitive processing and the content of learning.

Scharle & Szabo's (2000:1) three phase model involved 'raising awareness', 'changing attitudes' and 'transferring roles'. Each of these models implies a possible progression from 'lower' to 'higher' levels of autonomy.

### **The importance of learner autonomy**

The importance of learner autonomy is based on that autonomous learners accept responsibility for their own learning. Little (1991) pointed that autonomous learners understand the purpose of their learning program, explicitly accept responsibility for their learning, share in the setting of goals, take initiatives in planning and executing learning and evaluate its effectiveness.

Holec (1980) stated that autonomy which is considered as feeling free and volitional in one's actions is a basic human need. It is nourished by, and in turn nourishes, our intrinsic motivation, our proactive interest in the world around us. This explains how learner autonomy solves the problem of learner motivation: autonomous learners draw on their intrinsic motivation when they accept responsibility for their own learning and commit themselves to develop the skills of reflective self-management in learning; and success in learning strengthens their intrinsic motivation. The efficiency and effectiveness of the autonomous learner means that the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom can be applied to situations that arise outside the classroom.

EFL students need to be able to work independently, become efficient problem solvers, engage in self-evaluation, and be able to develop higher order skills to become "lifelong learners" in an increasingly globalized, technolog-

ical world (Davison, 2009). Employability and the changing needs of the workplace are also two important arguments for the promotion of greater learner autonomy in today's learners.

Research has shown that autonomous learners hold positive attitudes towards learning and achieve good results and they see the need to learn and are able to transfer what they have learned to wider contexts. Benson (2001) stresses that research within the psychology of learning provides strong grounds for believing that autonomy is essential to effective learning.

### **Teachers' role in learner autonomy**

EFL teachers should

- use the target language as the preferred medium of classroom communication and require the same of their learners;
- involve their learners in a non-stop quest for good learning activities, which are shared, discussed, analysed and evaluated with the whole class – in the target language, to begin with in very simple terms;
- help their learners to set their own learning targets and choose their own learning activities, subjecting them to discussion, analysis and evaluation in the target language;
- require their learners to identify individual goals but pursue them through collaborative work in small groups;
- require their learners to keep a written record of their learning – plans of lessons and projects, lists of useful vocabulary, whatever texts they themselves produce;
- engage their learners in regular evaluation of their progress as individual learners and as a class in the target language.

EFL teachers, as the main component to develop learner autonomy in English learning process, need adjust their roles to better facilitate students' autonomous learning. There is no doubt that teachers should assume various roles in autonomous learning environment (Hua, 2001; Wang, 2002). Teachers should assume more roles and

responsibilities in autonomous learning context rather than the unidirectional role as knowledge supplier in the traditional teaching context. Thus, in autonomous learning teachers are expected to play the role as guide, facilitator, assessor, psychological coordinator, source of information, learner and researcher.

More specific roles can be summarized as follows: helping students develop the awareness of autonomous learning and confidence in English language learning; getting to know students' situation in learning English; guiding students to make practical learning plans and objectives; introducing learning strategies combined with class instruction in a systematic way; offering students as many chances as possible to think about the newly learned learning strategies and put them into practice; encouraging more communication between teachers and students via various channels to monitor students' learning process; helping students evaluate their English learning by giving immediate and appropriate feedback; provide more opportunities for students to develop their autonomous learning ability; creating the harmonious class environment that facilitates learner autonomy.

the task of EFL teacher is "teaching students how to learn rather than merely 'covering' a fixed curriculum" (Gross, 1992, p. 141). So it is hoped that teachers should introduce learning strategies and study skills integrated with their regular class teaching and also provide possible chances for students to practice them, which is also compatible with the requirements of tertiary English teaching. Only in this way can teachers make it possible for students to have necessary independence and self-reliance to keep on learning after they leave the classrooms, thus be autonomous learners.

### **Developing Learner Autonomy in the classroom**

Winne & Hadwin (1998) identified four key phases in language study which require a relatively extensive amount of independent learning and learner self-management. The four phases to build skills for developing learner autonomy are: (1) defining

tasks; (2) setting goals and planning; (3), enacting study tactics and strategies; and (4), metacognitively adapting studying.

Reinders (2010) also, suggested a framework of eight learning stages that can be implemented in either teacher-directed or learner-directed environments since many teaching and learning situations would probably fall somewhere between these two extremes. These eight stages are:

1/ Identifying needs 2/ Setting goals 3/ Planning learning 4/ Selecting resources 5/ Selecting learning strategies 6/ Practice 7/ Monitoring progress 8/ Assessment and revision. In this framework, the activities involve a shift of focus from the teacher onto the learners. Knowing that they are valued as individuals and are supported in their learning which means that students are more likely to develop this mind set. EFL teachers are encouraged to consider shifting roles and propel their students to take initiative and be more responsible for their own learning.

### **EFL students' role in developing their autonomy**

The key to succeed in learning depends on allowing each individual to construct their own meaning, not make them memorize and repeat another person's meaning. In formal learning environments, learners can be enabled to construct their own personal learning spaces in accordance with their personal and educational needs. It seems that if learners are given a share of responsibility in the decision-making processes regarding dimensions such as pace, sequence, mode of instruction, and content of study, learning could be "more focused and more purposeful, and thus more effective both immediately and in the longer term" (Little, 1991, p.8).

For EFL students to be autonomous learners, according to Holec, they need to have the capacity to exercise control over the learning process in terms of determining the objectives of their own learning, choosing the content, selecting the techniques and methods of learning, monitoring their own progress and evaluating what has been acquired. Little (1991) added cognitive factors to what

an autonomous learner could do. These include a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, independent action, psychological relation to the process and content of their learning and finally transferring what they have learned to wider contexts

Mynard and Sorflaten (2002) suggest that learner independence ranges across a continuum, where at one end there are dependent learners who have had little opportunity to develop independent learning skills, and at the other end of the continuum there are learners who are self-directed, self-motivated and capable of learning without a teacher. Successful learners, they propose, would progress gradually along the continuum with the help of peers, teachers and appropriate learning experiences.

### **Responsibility and autonomy**

While autonomy is defined as the freedom and ability to manage one's own affairs, which entails the right to make decisions as well. Responsibility is understood as being in charge of something with the implication that one has to deal with the consequences of one's own actions. Autonomy and responsibility both require active involvement, and they are apparently very much interrelated (Little, 2000).

Little (2000) states that in order to foster learner autonomy, we need to develop a sense of responsibility and also encourage learners to take an active part in making decisions about their learning.

### **Autonomous Learning Responsibility for Teachers and Students**

What is meant by students' taking responsibility on learning is to partially or totally control various processes such as deciding on the learning goals that are traditionally overtaken by teachers, choosing teaching methods and evaluating the process (Wang, 2011). This depends on development of learners' autonomous learning behaviors.

Little (2000:6) states that:

*We think of autonomy or responsibility as attitudes that students may possess to varying degrees. No student is completely without a sense of responsibility... Personality traits, preferred learning styles, and cultural attitudes set limits to the development of autonomy.*

Development of autonomous behaviors is dependent on opportunities given to individuals over the course of experiences and on behaviors of other people they are in interaction with. Training of students in a way that they can take on the responsibility of their own learning process can be ensured in learning environments where various variables that affect learning are enriched through students' opinions and where autonomy is accepted as a classroom culture (Öztürk, 2011). It is expressed that passive learning behaviors are not innate and that since educational systems cannot provide appropriate educational conditions, students' autonomous learning development is impaired (Holden & Usuki, 1999). Based on this, students must be given autonomous learning opportunities.

### **3. Method**

The researcher used the quantitative method to investigate autonomous learning perceptions and responsibility of EFL students in the Faculty of Education through the students' questionnaire. Also, teachers' perceptions of autonomous learning responsibility are explored through teachers' questionnaire.

#### **Subjects**

Participants in this research comprised of 82 EFL students at the department of English- Faculty of Education-University of Dongola -Sudan. They were chosen from sixth, seventh, eighth and tenth semesters and their ages ranged from 19 to 24. Before conducting the questionnaires, the subjects were informed verbally by the researcher that their participation in the study was completely voluntary. 25 EFL teachers were contacted to participate in answering the teachers' questionnaire.

#### **Instruments**

A questionnaire was developed to investigate the students' autonomous learning perceptions and responsibility. This questionnaire was built on a questionnaire originally developed by Xu, Peng and Wu (2004). It contained 51 items in total involving the following aspects: 26 items to measure the students' motivation level, their perceptions of teaching and learning objectives and learning strategies, and 14 items to evaluate learners' level of monitoring and evaluating the English learning process. The last section (11 items) explores the students' and teachers' perceptions of autonomous learning responsibility.

### Validity and Reliability

As stated by Pallant (2005): "Ideally, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of a scale should be above 0.7". As shown in table 2 below, according to the Cronbach's Alpha analysis there are high validity and reliability coefficients that ranged between (0.89-0.97) for the questionnaire items, which indicate internal consistency of the items of the questionnaire. The correlation value is between (0.548-0.625) at less than 0.05 level of significance.

	Test of validity	Test of reliability	degree of association	Items' average	Fisher Statistics	level of significance
EFL Students' questionnaire	0.89	0.94	0.625	4.21	7.98	0.000
EFL teachers' questionnaire	0.95	0.97	0.548	3.50	23.4	0.000

**Table 2: the questionnaires' validity and reliability**

### Data Collection

The questionnaire copies were handed out after the students' regular English class time. All the items in the questionnaire were written in Arabic in order to make students have a better understanding of the items and fill out their answers more conveniently,

accurately and quickly. Fortunately, students could finish the task carefully in accordance with their real situation. This was followed by data analysis.

### Data Analysis and results

The statistical analysis was generated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 25. The participants' responses to the close-ended questionnaire were quantitatively analyzed as follows.

#### Analysis of the EFL students' questionnaire

To obtain an accurate representation of the respondents' perceptions, each of the questionnaire items were analyzed statistically in terms of frequency counts and percentages as represented in the following table.

**Table (3): "The level of students' motivation"**

<i>No</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Sample response</i>
1	I try my best to learn English.	76	6	0	0	0	4.93	0.26	98.6	Strongly agree
2	Even if there is no attendance requirement in the English lecture, my attendance will .be high	56	13	5	8	0	4.43	0.98	88.6	Strongly agree

<i>No</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Sample response</i>
3	I want to continue studying English for as long as possible.	73	9	0	0	0	4.89	0.31	97.8	Strongly agree
4	I love working in groups or pairs in the English class.	56	18	4	4	0	4.54	0.8	90.8	Strongly agree
5	I like to review my lessons in advance.	49	31	2	0	0	4.57	0.54	91.4	Strongly agree
6	I use the library to study English.	22	29	22	9	0	3.78	0.96	75.6	Agree
All items							4.52	0.8	90.4	Strongly agree

The main finding that could be drawn from table (3) regarding the students' motivation level was that 98.6% of the respondents strongly agree that they do their best to learn English. Additionally, 88.6% of the participants strongly agree that their attendance is high in the English lectures even if there is no attendance require-

ment. Likewise, a large number of students express their desire to continue studying English as long as possible (97.8%) and their love of working in groups or pairs in the English class (90.8%). A considerable number of respondents (91.4%) strongly agree that they like to review their lessons in advance. Nevertheless, 75.6% of the respondents agree that they use the library to study English. The modest percentage is justified by that most learners nowadays depend on technological devices rather than the library in their study.

**Table (4): Understanding the teaching objectives and course requirements**

<i>N0</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Sample Response</i>
1	I understand the course requirements	30	45	5	2	0	4.26	0.68	85.2	Strongly agree
2	I understand the requirements of each lecture	41	34	5	2	0	4.39	0.71	87.8	Strongly agree
3	I am able to transform the teacher's teaching goals into my own educational goals	39	22	14	7	0	4.13	0.98	82.6	agree
4	I know that it is very important to study according to the objectives of the course	55	25	2	0	0	4.65	0.53	93	Strongly agree

<i>No</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Sample Response</i>
5	I Find out why a teacher uses a specific activity to improve my skills	48	27	7	0	0	4.5	0.65	90	Strongly agree
6	I Find opportunities to learn English outside the lecture	35	37	4	6	0	4.23	0.85	84.6	Strongly agree
All items							4.36	0.77	87.2	Strongly agree

As shown in table (4) above regarding the six indicators to measure the students' understanding of the teaching objectives and course requirements, 85.2% of the respondents strongly agree that they understand the course requirements, and that they understand the requirements of each lecture (87.8%). Being able to transform the teachers' teaching goals into their own educational goals is agreed upon by 82.6% of the students. Additionally, 93% of the participants strongly agree that they know the importance of studying according to the objectives of the course, while 90% of them strongly agree that they know why EFL teacher uses a specific activity to improve their skills. Likewise, 84.6% of the participants strongly agree on finding opportunities to learn English outside the lecture.

#### **Table (5): preparing personal learning goals and study plans**

<i>No</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Sample Response</i>
1	I find ways to overcome those psychological factors that may have a negative impact on my studies of the English language	37	35	4	4	2	4.23	0.93	84.6	Strongly agree
2	I try to take advantage of the educational resources available	42	36	4	0	0	4.46	0.59	88.2	Strongly agree
3	I try to use the new knowledge I learned when I practice my English	47	33	2	0	0	4.55	0.54	91	Strongly agree
4	I try to cooperate and learn with my classmates	47	30	3	2	0	4.49	0.69	89.8	Strongly agree

<i>No</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Sample Response</i>
5	I realize the learning mistakes I made during the study process	34	43	5	0	0	4.35	0.59	87	Strongly agree
6	I know the reasons for making mistakes and take the necessary actions to correct them	39	38	5	0	0	4.41	0.6	88.2	Strongly agree
7	I try to use appropriate learning methods to make myself a better language learner	60	22	0	0	0	4.73	0.44	94.6	Strongly agree
8	I check if I have finished my study plan at the end of the English language course	34	40	8	0	0	4.32	0.64	86.4	Strongly agree

<i>N0</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Sample Response</i>
9	I check if I have learned the previous knowledge when I finish a task of learning English	43	32	7	0	0	4.44	0.65	88.8	Strongly agree
All items							4.44	0.66	88.8	Strongly agree

Table (5) above shows the students' responses to preparing personal learning goals and study plans. The highest percentage of agreement (94.4) is given to using appropriate learning methods to make a better EL learner. Additionally, using the new knowledge that they have learned to practice their English is given 91% and cooperation with their classmates is strongly agreed upon by 89.8%. Similar percentages (88.2%) are given to making advantage of available educational resources and knowing the reasons behind their mistakes during the study process. Also, high number of responses (86.4% and 88.8%) respectively indicated that they check their fulfilment of their study plan by the end of the course and check their learning of previous knowledge when finishing a task of learning English. Furthermore, a considerable number of participants (87%) strongly agree that they realize their mistakes during the study process, and 84.6% of them assert that they find ways to overcome psychological negative impact on their EFL study.

**Table (6): Students' perceptions of their use of general learning strategies**

<i>No</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Sample Response</i>
1	I understand English learning strategies in general.	37	21	16	8	0	4.06	1.02	81.2	agree
2	I use listening strategies when I practice listening skills.	44	16	16	6	0	4.2	0.99	84	Strongly agree
3	I use communication strategies when communicating in English	39	28	9	6	0	4.22	0.91	84.4	Strongly agree
4	I use reading strategies when I do English reading.	52	22	4	4	0	4.49	0.8	89.8	Strongly agree
5	I use writing strategies when writing in English	54	14	12	2	0	4.46	0.83	89.2	Strongly agree
All items							4.29	0.93	85.8	Strongly agree

The main finding that could be drawn from table (6) regarding the students' perceptions of their use of general learning strategies was that 81.2% of the respondents agree that they understand English learning strategies in general. Additionally, 84% of the participants strongly agree that they use listening strategies when practice listening skills. Likewise, a large number of students

(84.4% and 89.8% respectively) express their strong agreement on using communication strategies when communicate in English, and their use of reading strategies when they read in English. A considerable number of respondents (89.2%) strongly agree that they use writing strategies when writing in English.

**Table (7): Monitoring and evaluating the process of English language learning**

No	Items	<i>Always</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Sample Re- sponse</i>
1	I feel I can make the necessary progress in the syllabus.	54	13	15	0	0	4.48	0.78	89.6	Al- ways
2	Besides lecture tasks and duties, I develop my own English study plan.	37	32	7	6	0	4.22	0.88	84.4	Al- ways
3	I set my own study goals according to my own abilities.	56	20	4	2	0	4.59	0.7	91.8	Al- ways
4	I adjust my study plan if necessary.	30	19	29	4	0	3.91	0.95	78.2	Often
5	I develop a time plan for studying English.	50	22	4	4	2	4.39	0.96	87.8	Al- ways

No	Items	<i>Always</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Sample Re- sponse</i>
6	I prepare my English course goals according to the English curriculum.	41	20	6	11	4	4.01	0.24	80.2	Often
7	I set goals for learning English	50	19	9	2	2	4.38	0.95	87.6	Al- ways
8	I listen to radio and film in English and read books in English.	35	17	25	5	0	4	0.99	80	Often
9	I benefit from others' assessment of my English abilities.	58	9	13	2	0	4.5	0.84	90	Al- ways
10	I make decisions that help my self-learning	42	26	12	2	0	4.32	0.81	86.4	Al- ways
11	I could risk learning English.	61	7	7	5	0	4.55	0.89	91	Al- ways
12	I take notes during class to help me study	67	10	5	0	0	4.76	0.55	95.2	Al- ways

No	Items	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	% Percentage	Sample Response
13	I select the most important points and design diagrams/ tables when studying English.	46	20	10	4	2	4.27	1.01	85.4	Always
14	I guess what words are like when I study English.	53	20	9	0	0	4.54	0.68	90.8	Always
						All items	4.35	0.92	87	Always

Table (7) demonstrates students reported strategies in monitoring and evaluating their language learning process. The highest responses with the option “always” are given to taking notes during class (95.2%), setting their own study goals according to their own abilities (91.8%), taking risk to learn English (91%), guessing what words are like when study English (90.8%) and to benefit from others’ assessment of their English abilities (90%). Meanwhile, considerable number of responses with the option “always” are given to the items of being able to make the necessary progress (89.6%), developing a time plan for studying English (87.8%), setting goals for learning English (87.6%), making decisions that help self-learning (86.4%), selecting the most important points and design diagrams/tables when studying English (85.4%), and developing their own English study plan (84.4%). Nevertheless, the students’ responses with “often” as their option

to the items of preparing their English course goals (80.2%), listening to radio/films and reading books in English (80%), and adjusting their study plan if necessary (78.2%) show the least percentages of the participants' responses.

### Perception of responsibility from students' point of view

The results of this section of the students' questionnaire reveals that students feel most responsible for determining what they learn outside English language lecture (74.4%), On the other hand, they consider stimulating the student's interest in learning English a shared responsibility (75.6%) and the rest of the responsibilities are placed on the EFL teacher. It is shown in Table 8 below.

**Table (8): Perception of responsibility from the students' point of view**

No.	Items	Teacher's Responsibility	Student's Responsibility	Shared Responsibility	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	% Percentage	Responsibility
1	Stimulating the student's interest in learning English	14	6	62	1.32	0.48	75.6	Shared responsibility
2	Identifying the student's strengths and weaknesses in learning English language	35	22	25	1.96	0.85	42.7	Teacher's responsibility

No.	Items	<i>Teacher's Responsibility</i>	<i>Student's Responsibility</i>	<i>Shared Responsibility</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
3	Determining the objectives of the English language course	59	7	16	1.89	0.63	72	Teacher's responsibility
4	Determining what will be learned in the next English lecture	56	15	11	2.05	0.78	68.3	Teacher's responsibility
5	Choosing which activities to use in an English lecture	58	5	19	1.83	0.59	70.7	Teacher's responsibility
6	Determining how long the student will spend on each activity	45	11	26	1.82	0.71	54.9	Teacher's responsibility
7	Choosing the educational materials to be used in English lessons	51	10	21	1.87	0.7	62.2	Teacher's responsibility

No.	Items	Teacher's Responsibility	Student's Responsibility	Shared Responsibility	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	% Percentage	Responsibility
8	Assessment of the student's educational performance	75	0	7	1.91	0.28	91.5	Teacher's responsibility
9	Evaluation of the English language course	45	7	30	1.72	0.65	54.9	Teacher's responsibility
10	Determining what the student learns outside English language lecture	9	61	12	2.6	0.67	74.4	Student's responsibility
11	Ensuring the student's progress during the English language lectures	40	4	38	1.59	0.59	48.8	Teacher's responsibility
				All items	1.87	0.75	54	Teacher's responsibility

The findings in table 8 reveal that students' perceptions of responsibility are mostly placed on EFL teacher with the highest response (91.5%) to the assessment of the student's educational

performance, followed by determining the objectives of the English language course (72%) and choosing which activities to use in an English lecture (70.7%). However, the lowest percentages according to the students' views are given to the items: Choosing the educational materials (62.2%), evaluation of the English language course (54.9%) and determining how long the student will spend on each activity (54.9%), Ensuring the student's progress (48.8%), and the least percentage is given to identifying the student's strengths and weaknesses in learning English (42.7%).

### **Perception of Responsibility from Teachers' Point of View**

As shown in table 9 below, the results of the EFL teachers' questionnaire reveal that they feel most responsible for determining the objectives of the English language course (85.7%) and choosing educational material to be used in the English course (76.2%). Similar results were obtained for determining how long the students spend on each activity (71.4%) and assessing the students' educational performance (71.4%).

On the other hand, teacher response (57.1%) to the item: "Stimulating the student's interest in learning English" as shared responsibility matches the students' response to the same item. Also there is a match between teachers and students' response to the item: "Determining what the student learns outside English language lecture" as the students' responsibility by 52.4%. EFL teachers give moderate responses for them being responsible for identifying the student's strengths and weaknesses in learning English (66.7%). The same percentage is given to determining what will be learned in the next English lecture (66.7%) and choosing which activities to use in an English lecture (66.7%). It is worth mentioning that the lowest percentages of the teachers' responses are given to ensuring the student's progress during the English language lectures (61.9%) and evaluation of the English language course (52.1%).

### **Table 9: Perception of Responsibility from EFL Teachers' Point of View**

No.	Items	<i>Teacher's Responsibility</i>	<i>Student's Responsibility</i>	<i>Shared Responsibility</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
1	Stimulating the student's interest in learning English	9	0	12	1.86	0.49	57.1	Shared responsibility
2	Identifying the student's strengths and weaknesses in learning English language	14	2	5	2.43	0.66	66.7	Teacher's responsibility
3	Determining the objectives of the English language course	18	0	3	2.71	0.35	85.7	Teacher's responsibility
4	Determining what will be learned in the next English lecture	14	2	5	2.43	0.66	66.7	Teacher's responsibility

No.	Items	<i>Teacher's Responsibility</i>	<i>Student's Responsibility</i>	<i>Shared Responsibility</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
5	Choosing which activities to use in an English lecture	14	1	6	2.38	0.58	66.7	Teacher's responsibility
6	Determining how long students spend on each activity	15	1	5	2.48	0.56	71.4	Teacher's responsibility
7	Choosing the educational materials to be used in English course	16	0	5	2.52	0.43	76.2	Teacher's responsibility
8	Assessment of the student's educational performance	15	0	6	2.43	0.45	71.4	Teacher's responsibility

No.	Items	<i>Teacher's Responsibility</i>	<i>Student's Responsibility</i>	<i>Shared Responsibility</i>	<i>Arithmetic mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>% Percentage</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
9	Evaluation of the English language course	12	1	8	2.19	0.59	57.1	Teacher's responsibility
10	Determining what the student learns outside English language lecture	2	11	8	1.71	0.66	52.4	Student's responsibility
11	Ensuring the student's progress during the English language lectures	13	0	8	2.24	0.49	61.9	Teacher's responsibility
All items					2.32	0.64	61.5	Teacher's responsibility

It is observed that EFL teachers and students agree on one item to be the student's responsibility and one item to be shared responsibility. The convergence of both teachers' and students'

responses to the **perception of responsibility** to the option “the teacher’s responsibility” is shown in the table below.

**Table 10: Convergence of EFL Teachers and Students Responses**

No.	Aspect	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	% Percentage	Responsibility
1	Students’ point of view	1.87	0.75	54	Teacher’s responsibility
2	Teachers’ point of view	2.32	0.64	61.5	Teacher’s responsibility
	Average	2.1	0.7	57.8	Teacher’s responsibility

This result agrees with Üstünlouğlu, (٢٠٠٩) who found that though university students see themselves competent, they do not take on learning responsibility and, instead, teachers undertake most responsibilities.

### Discussion

According to the statistical results, University of Dongola EFL students in this study reported having positive perceptions of autonomous learning, in spite of that they tend to place most responsibility of EFL learning on their teachers.

Apart from being motivated (the highest mean:4.52) and preparing their personal goals and study plans (the second highest mean:4.44), when it comes to using learning strategies (mean:4.29), monitoring and evaluating their English learning process (mean:4.35), the participants are not quite keen on these areas. As a result of these findings based on the learners’ responses, it is found that the learners in this research have positive per-

ceptions and moderate behavior towards learner autonomy.

On the other hand, the students' perception of responsibility was directed to the teacher as the most responsible for most of the processes of learner autonomy which means that they are in the first stage of autonomous learning and that they need to be directed to the stages of changing attitudes and transfer. these results indicate that the learners' awareness of autonomous learning is already raised. Changing attitudes and transaction (being able to transfer what they have learned to wider contexts) needs more practice on LA.

Agreeing with the literature which emphasize the interrelation between autonomy and responsibility, the researcher considers responsibility as a determining factor that enhance students' autonomous language learning, and that it is a higher level of autonomous learning and the researcher thinks that participants need more practice to improve their autonomous learning capacities. When EFL student's do not take responsibility for their learning it inhibits the practice of learner autonomy.

In other words, in order to be involved in autonomous self-regulated learning behaviors, students need to move forward from awareness to changing attitudes which requires a lot of practice and patience for both teachers and students to allow for more learner initiatives. This can lead to the third stage of learner autonomy which is transferring roles that demands teachers to give students a considerable amount of freedom in accomplishing tasks, or even, in deciding about tasks.

A justification for the result that despite the students' positive views on learner autonomy, they tended to rely on teachers for taking responsibility of their learning is that students' attitudes towards autonomy seem to be strongly affected by their own learning experiences and influence their roles in fostering their autonomy which are in agreement with Szöcs, (2017). Cotterall, (1995: 196) stated that 'the beliefs learners hold may either contribute to

or impede the development of their potential for autonomy', the results of this study show that their positive perceptions can be an indicator that they are ready to develop their autonomy if suitable adaptations implemented in their learning environment. So I suggest that further studies to be conducted on how autonomous learning can be adapted into the classroom activities.

## **Recommendations:**

EFL students need to be encouraged and trained on how to take control of their own learning, or at least some aspects of their learning such as self-assessment and reflection.

To further raise teachers and learners' awareness of LA, well-planned professional development programs, workshops and training sessions to be regularly conducted for teachers at various levels of education in order to show practically how teachers and students can give up their traditional roles and take on new ones that promote LA.

These training sessions should aim at helping teachers develop awareness of the potential of learner autonomy in creating independent and reflective learners.

EFL teachers are to develop expertise in pedagogy for autonomy. Integrating aspects of teacher and learner autonomy into teacher education. Autonomous learning needs to develop awareness attitude which takes time and is generally a slow process.

learner autonomy should be listed among the explicitly stated educational aims in the curriculum of the English syllabus for EFL prospect teachers at the faculties of Education, and to incorporate activities that aim to develop LA into the English syllabus.

EFL students need to be given opportunities to monitor and evaluate their process of learning rather than the outcome which is an essential first step to the development of a responsible attitude towards LA.

EFL teachers need to show willingness to share responsibility with their learners and consider them as partners by delegating to them tasks and decisions such as choosing materials or correcting mistakes.

## **Conclusion**

This study attempted to investigate the important issue of learner autonomy and to explore the perceptions and responsibilities of both EFL teachers and students in developing learner autonomy.

## References

- (1) Benson, P. Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning. (2001). London: Longman.
- (2) Breen, M. P. & Candlin, C. The essentials of a communicative curriculum in language teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, (1980). 1 (2), 89-112.
- (3) Carr, P. B. The measurement of resourcefulness intentions in the adult autonomous learner (Doctoral dissertation, The George Washington University, 1999). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 60, 3849.
- (4) Chen, H. (2015). The correlations between learner autonomy and the effective factors in college English learning in China. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 8(2), 70-84.
- (5) Cotterall, S. Readiness for Autonomy: Investigating Learner Beliefs. (1995) *System* 23(2), 195-205.
- (6) Davison, G. UK Higher Education Funding Council - CETL, Northumbria University of Cumbria, (2009). In Al-Saadi, From Spoon Feeding to Self-Feeding, (2011) *Arab World English Journal* Ps.95-114.
- (7) Derrick, M. G. The measurement of an adult's intention to exhibit persistence in autonomous learning (Doctoral dissertation, The George Washington University, (2001). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62, 2533.
- (8) Dickinson, L. Self-instruction in language learning. (1987). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (9) Gremmo, M. J. & Abe, D. Teaching learning: redefining the teacher's role. In Riley, P. (ed.) (1985). *Discourse and Learning*. London: Longman.
- (10) Gross, R. Lifelong learning in the learning society of the twenty-first century. In Collins, C. & J. Mangieri (eds.). *Teaching Thinking: An Agenda for the Twenty-first Century*. (1992). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- (11) Hammond, M. and R. Collins, *Self-Directed Learning: Critical Practice*. (1991). London: Kogan Page.
- (12) Holden, B. & Usuki, M. *Learner autonomy in language learning: A preliminary investigation*. (1999). Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content.pdf>.
- (13) Holec, H. *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. (1980) Council of Europe: Strasbourg, France.
- (14) Holec, H. *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. (1981). Oxford: Pergamon. <http://ilearn.20m.com/research/zuide.htm>.
- (15) Hua, W. F. On the positioning of foreign language teachers in the autonomous learning model. (2001). *Foreign Languages Research*, 69(3), 76-78.
- (16) Hurd, S. *Autonomy at any price? Issues and concerns from a British HE perspective?* (1998). *Foreign Language Annals* 31.2, 219-230.
- (17) Jones, J. *Self-access and culture*. *ELT Journal*, (1995). 49(3), 228-234.
- (18) Knowles, M. *Using Learner Contracts*. San Francisco: (1986). Jossey-Bass.
- (19) Little, D. *Why focus on learning rather than teaching?* (2000). In D. Little, L. Dam, and J. Timmer (Eds.), *Focus on Learning Rather than Teaching: Why and how? Papers from the International association of teachers of English as a foreign language 48 (IATEFL) Conference (Krakow, Poland, May 14-16, 1998)*. (pp. 3-17). Dublin Ireland: Centre for Language and Communication Studies. Trinity College.
- (20) Little, D. *Learner autonomy and human interdependence: some theoretical and practical consequences of a social-interactive view of cognition, learning and language* (2000a). In B. Sinclair, I. McGrath and T. Lamb (eds.), *Learner Autonomy, Teacher Autonomy: Future Directions*, 15-23. Harlow: Longman/Pearson Education.
- (21) Little, D. *Learner autonomy 1: Definitions, issues and problems*. (1991). Dublin: Authentik.

- (22) Littlewood, W. Defining and developing autonomy in East Asian contexts. *Applied Linguistics*, (1999). 20(1), 71-94.
- (23) Mynard, J. and Sorflaten, R. Independent learning in your classroom, IL Sig, TESOL Arabia.(2002).
- (٢٤) <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Bξl°skZEξGiTOTdZRHU\`eU°RcUU>
- (25) Nunan, D. Designing and Adapting Materials to Encourage Learner Autonomy. (1997). In P. Benson, & P. Voller (Eds.). *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning* (pp. 192-203). London: Longman.
- (26) Öztürk, İ. H. Curriculum reform and teacher autonomy in Turkey: The case of the history teaching. *International Journal of Instruction*, (2011). 4(2), 113-128.
- (27) Pallant, J. *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS for Windows*. (2005). New York: McGraw Hill.
- (28) Reinders Towards a Classroom Pedagogy for Learner Autonomy: A Framework of Independent Language Learning Skills Middlesex University) *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* (2010) Vol 35, 5.
- (29) Reinders, H. & Cotterall, S. Language learners learning independently: How autonomous are they? *Toegepaste Taalwetenschappen in Artikelen*, (2000). 65(1), 85-97.
- (30) Reinders, H. & Lewis, M. The development of an evaluative checklist for self-access materials. *ELT Journal* (2006). 60:2, 272-278.
- (31) Scharle, A. & A. Szabo. *Learner autonomy: A guide to developing learner responsibility*. (2000). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (32) Szócs Krisztina Teachers' and learners' beliefs about language learning autonomy and its implications in the classroom. *Journal of Applied Language Studies* (2017) Vol.11,2,125-145
- (33) Uştünlüoğlu, E. Autonomy in language learning: Do students take responsibility for their learning? *Journal of Theory and Practice in Education*, (2009). 5 (2), 148-169.

- (34) Voller, P. Does the teacher have a role in autonomous learning? In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning* (1997). pp. 98-113. London: Longman.
- (35) Wang, D. Q. Cultivation of College English autonomous learning ability. *Foreign Language World*, (2002). (5), 17-23.
- (36) Winne, P. H., Hadwin, A. F., Hacker, D., Dunlosky, J. & Graesser, A. C. Studying as self-regulated learning. In *Metacognition in educational theory and practice*. (1998). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- (37) Xu, J. F., Peng, R. Z., & Wu, W. The investigation and analysis of non-English major students' learner autonomy. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, (2004). (1), 64-68.