

CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES THAT FACE UNIVERSITY TEACHER TO PROMOTE AUTONOMOUS/SELF-DIRECTED –LEARNING FEASIBILITY

Sub-topic: Advent of Self-directed Learning in Algerian Universities

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Abstract

Self-directed learning is arguably one of the most pressing concerns and key themes in our epochs in the field of foreign language teaching in both pre-University and University levels. However, as a part in the teaching-learning process, the Algerian Secondary School and University actors lack a well-structured model to overcome the different challenges towards enhancing self-directed learning. In this respect, the following hypothesis: a clear deficit remains in self-directed learning unless clear techniques, methods and approaches are academically applied to enhance self-directed learning. Through using an exploratory method, content analysis and research synthesis approaches and scheduling interviews with experts in the field (at the Higher College for Teachers Training in Constantine) as tools of research, the present paper, furthermore, assumes that the Competency-Based Approach is proved not to be suitably applied in our pre-University institutions. This study will shed the light on the major challenges that face University teachers in enhancing well-based approaches towards self-directed learning. It will also spot the light on the status quo of both the Algerian teacher/learner torn between the anvil of traditional teacher-based approaches and the hammer of rote and ill-applied learner-centered approaches to learning mainly limited by institutional and individual constraints. Initial findings highlighted that teachers also caught between their positive theoretical insights and their less optimistic visions to feasibility in promoting autonomous learning. The latter, accordingly, might also be fostered via rote conditioning rather than critical thinking. Thus, the pertinent recommendation from this study is to bridge the academic and pedagogical gaps between the university teachers and their students towards long-lasting insights affecting positively the enhancement of well-applied autonomous learning at the Algerian University.

Keywords: Challenges, face, promoting, self-directed learning, feasibility

List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

CBA	Competency Based Approach
FC	Foreign Culture
NC	Native Culture
FL	Foreign Language
NL	Native Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ENSC	École Normale Supérieure de Constantine
LMD	License/Master/Doctorate
MLA	Modern Language Association
SILL	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

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General Introduction

The move from teacher-based teaching to student-based learning has been hastened by the concept of learner autonomy. This concept aims at putting students in charge of their learning and shifting the role of the teacher from a ‘dominant chalk and talk provider’ into a ‘facilitator of the teaching-learning process’. In the Algerian context, the traditional rote learning based on rote conditioning and teacher-based classrooms still continues in a changeable world that is heading into new horizons. Accordingly, this present study seeks revealing many underlying concerns and key challenges autonomous learning. The latter will be explored through studying the readiness of the Algerian university student in addition to the concepts and the steps towards achieving learner-centered approaches to foreign language teaching.

Promoting Learners’ Autonomy with its prominent concerns and underlying constraints will also be analyzed. Many informal interviews with both Teacher Training School's students and teachers will be used as tools for this research study in addition to self-reports data and classroom observations. Many questions about students’ and teachers’ perceptions, perspectives, roles, potentials, motivation and self-oriented activities in an EFL classroom will be raised and answered. Other questions such as what does ‘learner autonomy’ mean to English language teacher at the Algerian University? Why and how should a Student-centered approach be considered at the core of recent teaching styles? To what rate does learner-centeredness contribute in Foreign Language Learning? Why do teachers want to enhance student-centered teaching and for what benefits? How possible do teachers feel it is workable to enhance learner autonomy and how can these teachers create student-centered teaching? To what extent do teachers notify learners are self-centered or independent? To what extent teachers verbalize their satisfaction towards the development of learners’ autonomy? How do critical thinking, problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning and active learning promote a learner-centered classroom? How would the nexus research-teaching be able to contribute positively to the promotion of learner autonomy? Why do we need to exchange student-centered principles in a Conference of teachers rather than a workshop for students? Moreover, the central question of the present paper is: What challenges and constraints do teachers face in helping their learners to become more autonomous?

In brief, this study resulted in two central implications. The first is the urgent necessity for ‘learner training’ mainly for ‘future teachers’ at the Higher Colleges for Teacher Training (also called Teacher Training Schools). The second is the pressing need to have a new curriculum that supports learner autonomy. Constraints to these implications should be smoothly overtaken.

1.1. An overview of Students Autonomy

Learner autonomy is a problematic and hotly-controversial term that is excessively confused with some other terms such as “self-instruction”.....It is also a slippery notion that is hard to be defined precisely. A quick analysis of the concept

has resulted in a preliminary debate about whether learner autonomy ought to be thought of as an “ability to do” or “behavior in doing”; whether it is characterized by “learner responsibility” or “learner control”; and whether the evolution of learner autonomy relies on an integral teacher autonomy.

In an attempt to generate a comprehensive and an ideal survey on the notion; it is worth noting that ideas and insights about learner autonomy have changed the traditional images of an active teacher as front of knowledge and the learner as a passive receiver who just sit and listen. Students are gradually shifting into active and independent learners assuming more responsibility for their learning. Teachers, in turn, play the role of guiders; facilitating more and lecturing less.

Nowadays, there is a progressive theoretical inclination amongst learners toward self-study and independent-learning. This trend resulted from the terrible boom in technology use, distance learning, study scheduling, computer-oriented learning and e-learning. These instances illustrate the increasing theoretical consciousness amongst students towards taking charge of their learning and becoming less independent to the teacher.

The core of these days exemplary teaching is student-centered teaching. The latter is more efficient since it is away from spoon-feeding and traditional rote conditioning. Students, then, should be put forward at the center of the teaching-learning process and be given adequate control to their learning materials.

In student-centered teaching, teachers are required to center their schedules, planning, teaching and assessment on the needs and capacities of their students. Indeed, the central idea behind learners’ autonomy is that learning is most vivid and soulful when topics are pertinent to their needs, lives, concerns and interests. (“*Student Centered Learning*”). Further, students would be autonomous when they are actively involved in creating, understanding and tightly connecting to genuine knowledge.

Students will have elevated motivation to learn when they feel their real engagement in their field of study. Being at the core of the teaching-learning process offers students the opportunity to explore, experiment, examine their knowledge and practices (“*Student Centered Learning*”). Doing so keeps students away from rote learning based on blind memorization, learning by heart and mechanical conditioning.

Through diverse thoughts, the students are given the chance to be involved in decision-making processes of the classroom. Ultimately, learners should be treated as co-creators in the learning process rather than passive recipient of traditional lectured delivered by dominant teachers. Holec, expert in Pedagogy and a University teacher at the University of Nancy, in his book entitled *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning* states the following:

From linguistic to communicative competence, from behaviouristic to cognitive descriptions of the acquisition process, from priority to teaching and the teacher to priority to learning and the learner, this ongoing investigation drive has progressively allowed the learning/teaching community to conceptualize and in some environments to put into practice an entirely new, incomplete and imperfect though it still may be pedagogical paradigm. (3)

Holec means that the potential to take in charge of one's own learning serves a wide range of abilities to concretize mastery over his or her learning process such as setting the objectives, selecting the content to study, choosing strategies, approaches and methods of analysis, monitoring and assessing of one's learning(3).

This charge displays entire autonomy that results in full responsibility on the shoulders of students. In other words, there is unanimity that the practice of learner autonomy requires insight, a favorable attitude, an ability for reflection and a readiness to be a proactive in both self-control and reciprocal action or influence with others (Little para 3). This definition apprehends the challenge of learner autonomy: a paradigm of the learner that demands both the teacher and the learner to take part into the cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social measures of language learning and to care about how they interact with one another.

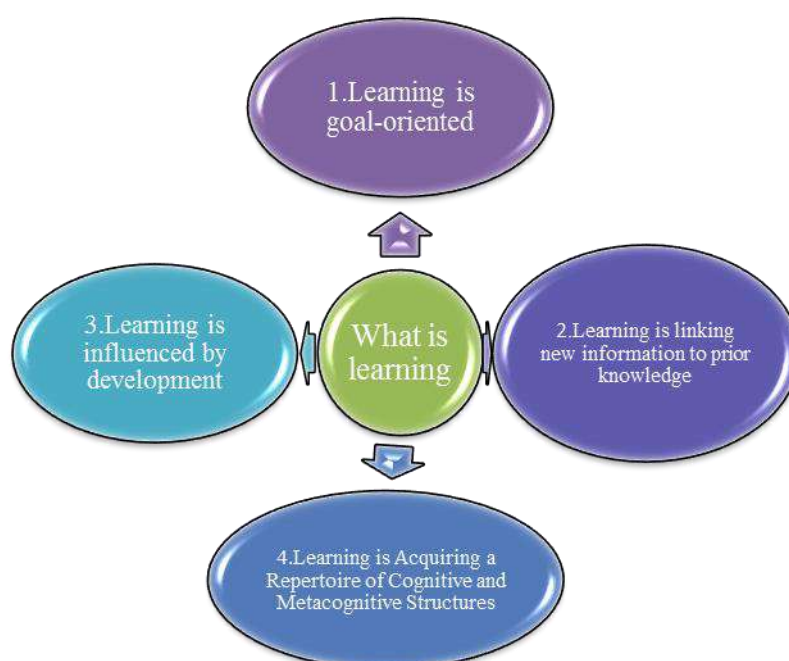


Figure 1: Research-based Statements about learning
(Jones et al.4)

1.1.2. Memorization V.s retention

Rote memorization is the favored Algerian student strategy instead of retention by critical thinking. This might be resulted from the memorization of both Quran and the sayings of Prophet Muhammed (Peace and Blessings be upon him). Indeed, this tradition dates back to the early Islamic schools, Zawiyas and Kuttab when Algerians learned Quran by heart through rote memorization.

The use of rote memorization starts in primary schools and continues through the various levels of pre-university education. When students get the Baccalaureate Exam and arrive at the doorstep of the University, they are reliant on the rote learning and dependent to the teacher as a unique source of knowledge. Teachers keep on their habits as explicit lectures deliverers; the administrative policies at both schools and universities preserve the status quo.

In turn, rote memorization should not be thoroughly rejected. It is frequently the only way to acquire “factual knowledge” such as irregularities in English (conjugation of irregular verbs and the plural of the eight words “ox-oxen, child-children, foot-feet, louse-lice, man-men, mouse-mice, tooth-teeth, woman-women). In history courses, learners are required to learn some significant dates, events and names of historical figures.

Furthermore, the flat features in writing such as capitalization, punctuation and indentation can only be memorized by rote. Additionally, some common expressions in English used for advising, interrupting and complaining can only be memorized in a rote way. Briefly, rote memorization should have its position in learning mainly to get factual knowledge, but negative transfer of this approach to all knowledge should be entirely rejected. Indeed, students cannot enhance their critical minds without a fundamental base of factual knowledge. Being “knowledgeable” is a pivotal step towards the different steps of critical reasoning (synthesizing, analyzing, evaluating, criticizing and creating).

1.1.3. Critical Learning V.s Rote Learning. Adoption and Denial

The present work aims at building awareness about the significance of adopting critical learning and rejecting rote learning based on “parrotry” repetition and “blind” acceptance of knowledge delivered explicitly by the teacher. Despite individual and institutional challenges that face both the learner and the teacher, the present contribution equally tries to reveal the inefficiency of rote learning owing to which students develop passive learning habits. More importantly, this study seeks to display two central ways to enhance critical learning and reject rote learning.

Our classroom experience as pupils at pre-university levels, as well as classroom observations as university students and teachers, have led us to notice that foreign language learning has been exclusively reduced to rote learning despite theoretical hopes to change things. As elementary consideration, learners do not show a perfect mastery they are supposed to learn and use appropriately, but rather work just for a pass mark. In this respect, teachers are required to take an “inspirational” role to promote a shift from rote to critical learning traditions.

Indeed, the present study raised many questions that their answers may serve the significance of the work. What makes the Algerian learners take resort mainly to the teacher and to rote learning? Why the Algerian students are unaware that critical thinking serves those best? How could teachers possibly make the Algerian learner learn effectively and enhance their critical thinking abilities?

In the light of these questions, one of the paper’s assumptions is the following: Unless teachers do not inspire their learners (and make them conscious about the importance of critical thinking strategies to construct a substantial knowledge and learning habits), learners then will not be able to learn critically and thus avoid rote learning that let them significantly dependent to their teachers.

1.1.3.1. Rote learning .Rejection

Rote learning embodies learning facts without developing any profound understanding of them. The lack of deep comprehending makes it so hard to grasp some notions as it is difficult to apply and transfer the acquired knowledge with

relations to real life situations. Further, it is worth adding that rote learning is a shallow copying of knowledge that results in superficial attitudes of learners.

Accordingly, rote learning is used to “cramming” “package” knowledge in order to be retrieved only by the short-term memory. Therefore, students become uninvolved from learning, from real life situations as well as they become so superficial and flat without any critical spirit.

To bring this element into close, it is worth referring to the urgent need to reject this kind of learning. Algerian educational institutions and universities are required to reject some rote traditions and habits that may lead to intellectually “sterile” elite.

1.1.3.2. Critical Learning. Adoption

Critical learners do not just memorize; rather they question to comprehend, examine to analyze, analyze to interpret, synthesize, evaluate, solve and create. Through critical thinking and learning, students are required to doubt and debate the material their courses (Crawford et al.). Critical learners can construct knowledge by linking what they have acquired as prior knowledge with newly learned acquaintance.

In other words, critical learning is precisely defined. Accordingly, to Cohen, Manion and Morrison: “learning critically ...is an active process in which learners construct and internalize new concepts, ideas and knowledge based on their own present and past experiences”(167). Critical learners should never be passive recipients of mere knowledge; rather, they build their knowledge the way it suits their learning strategies.

Indeed, critical learning can be considered as learning by reasoning and rote learning is learning by training. These two ways are stated by Luntly when he says:

The idea of learning by training seems straight forward and unproblematic. It is about acquiring habits of mind and behavior that have been shaped by others. Learning by reasoning is learning in which the pupil works out what to do and what to think for herself. This form of mental activity that requires the pupil think for himself and not just mimic patterns of thought and action proffered, we can say, she has to exhibit judgment. (180)

In brief, learning by critical reasoning is pivotal because it embodies a critical evaluation of the acquired knowledge, activities and experiences. Furthermore, it also entangles that learners assume responsibility for their learning. Critical learning requires learners to synthesize and reconcile the differences between the previous and the coming knowledge through using mental skills and rational dexterity.

It is worth noting that critical learning refers to the endeavors to go beyond what is given questioning, doubting, and examining the acquired material. Briefly, critical thinking is the process of thinking clearly with accuracy and precision. Thinking carefully that should be carried with logic and depth by exploring viewpoints and acknowledging assumptions.

As an operational definition linked to the field work of education and scientific research, critical thinking is that “sort of higher order thinking which carries surprise, prediction, finding solutions/alternatives, selection, decision making and

followup”(qtd.in Gheith 7).In other words, critical thinking allows students to think about their thoughts and the reason behind any delivered viewpoint. It also makes students reflect their learning on decision making and solving problems.

In fact, significant learning revolves around problem-solving; that embodies cognitive processes is directed to find solutions after representing the issue, planning to detect a schedule, execute these plans and then self-regulate the effectiveness of cognitive processing during problem-solving via objective assessment.

Essential knowledge can also be accompanied with reasoning that can be deductive and inductive. Therefore, critical thinking is a real milestone in critical education that should be urgently adopted to form future “productive” elite. Teachers should take part in this mission.

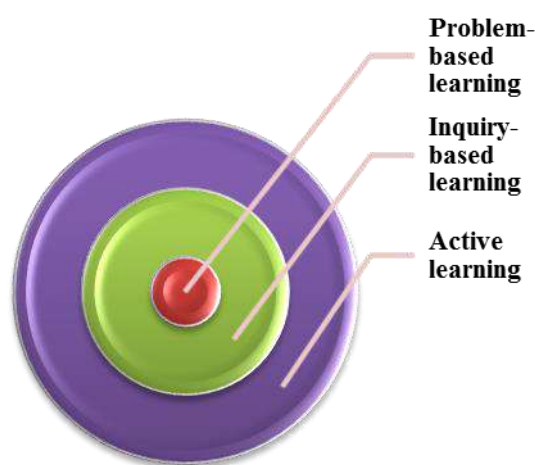


Figure02: The relations between inquiry-based learning ,problem – based learning and active learning (spronken-Smith et al)

1.1.4. The Impact of Inspirational teaching on the Learner

1.2. Learner Autonomy from an Algerian Perspective

From the present outlook, the Algeria educational and research institutions from pre-university and university levels are essentially preserving the traditional teacher-student-classroom setting where the responsibility of the teachers is paramount mainly in managing, controlling and lecturing. Algerian students are still keeping passive roles; listening and applying rules.

Indeed, this type of teacher-student ties begins early in the primary level and continuous through the middle school and secondary school. This system is based on nurturing pupils in pre-university grades who are commonly familiar with following rather than leading. When these pupils come to be students at the universities, they mostly afford the characteristics of dependent learners rather than autonomous ones.

1.3. Autonomy from a Cultural Perspective

Many viewpoints referred to the interwoven relation between autonomy and the learners’ culture. They argue that it is “necessary for language learning and education because these take place within a culture” (qtd.in Palfreyman, Smith 5).Accordingly, learner’s culture plays a vital role in the extent to which autonomy is

applied as it relates to one's "modes of thinking, acting and feeling" (ibid). Therefore, one's culture affects his or her attitude towards learning.

A learner with a given culture and with a particular behavior may find autonomy easier than another who belongs to some other cultures that encourages respect to someone more authoritarian and more knowledgeable within or outside the classroom. Thus, educators are raising the issue as to whether autonomy is suitable to "particular *national/ethnic* cultures such as 'Japanese culture' or 'Arab culture'" (Palfreyman, Smith 7). Cultural link to autonomy is of particular interest in this paper as one element of the quests of this work is to examine the Algerian students' readiness, aptitude and compatibility with autonomous learning of English as a foreign language.

Autonomy may be practiced in various ways and different cultural settings. A questionnaire handled by SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) to identify learning habits and attitudes of given people in different cultural settings. The findings of this questionnaire show that particular learning strategies are strange to some learners. For example, "guessing is more used by students in China than by students in Egypt or Puerto Rico" (Palfreyman, Smith 8). The results of this questionnaire may lead one's deduce that some cultures are embodying more autonomy than others.

Learners' beliefs, feelings and attitudes towards autonomy also play a fundamental role for learner independence, readiness as well as their aptitude. Some learners depend on teachers more than others; some see them as instructors and others view them as facilitators and guides. Thus, those who perceive teachers as facilitators tend to be more apt to becoming autonomous than others. Risk-taking and self-confident students also viewed to be more autonomous than others (Palfreyman, Smith 8).

Some other cultures show a great respect to the elderly and to the more knowledgeable and more experienced persons. This great respect is deemed to be a kind of "passivity" for other cultures. For instance in the Islamic, Arab and Turkish societies, respecting teachers is considered as a sacred attitude... " teach me one letter, and I will be your slave" and other sayings reflect the importance of the teacher. Similar sentiments are shown towards people of authority across various cultures in the world.

To conclude, it is worth noting that respect to teachers should not be negatively transferred to passive attitudes towards learning. Showing respect is virtuous and praiseworthy, but it should never be a constraint to meet autonomy in learning. Thus, the cultural background of the learner plays a great role in his perception to learning.

1.4. The Importance of the Study

Algerian students carry along their educational pursuit their previous learning habits and traditions of over-reliance on teachers when they arrive at the university level. Carrying passive practices can be a frustrating experience both for the learner and the teacher. University requirements are high and ambitious; they demand elevated academic and research achievements and endeavors that urge a great deal of hard work and independent research with high-rated learning-research nexus.

University teachers, then, show frustration as they get little in return for the efforts they exercise.

Low motivation, reluctance to do well-grounded research works, rote learning based on mere conditioning and “blind” memorization and weak learning-research nexus are some of the common issues that students have and teachers confront. Therefore, teachers find themselves regularly explicitly lecturing, tutoring, and instructing, wishing an abrupt awakening from their students.

Algerian University students are no less spiritless. They suddenly find themselves in a new context with a new discourse that is not familiar with what they used to be accustomed to. At the university level, teachers demand research project-based works, assignments with deadlines and high scientific, academic and research requirements. Accordingly, students are required to proceed research, visit the library browse the internet and reading assignments which require critical thinking rather rote memorization.

Students are also required to deal with some independent studies which are not easy to do and to cope with as well. Thus, these students feel that as if they were in a labyrinth or dropped in the ocean without having been thought how to swim; therefore, they desperately look for aid or life jackets that can be uniquely offered by their teachers.

This context evokes students’ over-reliance on their teachers, and this situation is unsustainable. Learner autonomy is the solution and the earlier they can reach self-reliance, the better for them, for their teachers, for their universities and their societies. As much as learners show autonomous attitudes, the change will gradually occur. Students first need to be tested for their readiness for managing their learning practices. Further, these students need to be prepared for a well-scheduled training before autonomous policies and procedures can be administered.

1.5. The Aim of the Study

The present paper aims at answering many questions about Algerian learner’s autonomy mainly at the university level. Further, this study is designed to examine some quests about the readiness of the Algerian learners to take charge of their learning for autonomous study of English as a foreign language and its culture. Students’ readiness will be viewed from various perspectives: responsibilities, motivation, abilities and self-directed practices. The central issue of this study is the challenges and constraints that face teachers to instill the “culture” of “autonomisation” in the Algerian students’ mind.

1.6. Research Questions and Hypotheses

What challenges and constraints do teachers face in helping their learners to become more autonomous?

Stating the problem, in fact, must be entailed with other various relevant research questions and pertinent concerns:

What does ‘learner autonomy’ mean to English language teacher at the Algerian University? Why and how should a Student-centered approach be considered at the core of recent teaching styles? To what rate does learner-centeredness contribute in Foreign Language Learning? Why do teachers want to enhance student-

centered teaching and for what benefits? How possible do teachers feel it is workable to enhance learner autonomy and how can these teachers create student-centered teaching? To what extent do teachers notify learners are self-centered or independent? To what extent teachers verbalize their satisfaction towards the development of learners' autonomy? How do critical thinking, problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning and active learning promote a learner-centered classroom? How would the nexus research-teaching be able to contribute positively to the promotion of learner autonomy? Why do we need to exchange student-centered principles in a Conference of teachers rather than a workshop for students?

The above questions led the researcher to assume the following hypotheses:

1. Algerian EFL pupils and students do not seem to be independent and autonomous in their learning; they do not show reveal practical readiness to learn independently from their teachers.
2. Many Algerian secondary and university teachers are not enough ready to get rid of their 'fossilized'/ 'chalk and talk' methods of teaching (explicit lecturing, preaching of lessons and lectures)
3. The Algerian EFL classroom is far away to suit an autonomous environment.
4. Many challenges and constraints obstruct the real implementation of 'autonomisation'

1.7. A Brief Review of the Literature

There is a considerable body of literature dealing with critical issues pertinent to research and learning strategies. In this paper; we will deal mainly and extensively with some guides in the field. The first book entitled *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*, published by Oxford College. The second book written by Crawford, A., Saul, E.W., Mathews, S., Makinster, J entitled *Teaching and Learning Strategies for Thinking Classroom*. The third guide is written by Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K.A entitled *Guide to Teaching Practice*. (5th Ed.). This paper is also indebted to David Nunan's four books entitled respectively: *The Learner-Centered Curriculum*, *Language Teaching Methodology*, *Learning-Centered Communication* and *Second Language Teaching and Learning*.

1.8. Research Methodology

To test the stated hypotheses, content analysis, an examination of prevailing ideas, views, and theoretical models will be used. In addition to that, we will conduct interviews with students, University and Associate Secondary teachers at the Higher College for Teacher Training, English Department (Constantine). As for methodology, we will refer to *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th edition*.

I hereby declare that all information in this paper has been used and presented in compliance with academic rules and ethical conduct. Accordingly, I tried as much as I can to apply methodological conventions as cited in *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th edition*. Unoriginal material and results have been fully cited and referenced in accordance with the rules of the Modern Language Association.

Part Two

2.1. Students' Readiness for Autonomous Learning

Algerian learners do not arrive at university with the ability to learn English autonomously. Autonomous learning is hardly a reality in the Algerian educational and research contexts. This is resulted from the spoon-feeding habits acquired from the secondary school. Those secondary-school pupils consider English as a secondary subject except for those of literary and foreign language streams. Accordingly, they are not significantly motivated. The lack of motivation causes more dependency to the teacher in learning. Therefore, many pupils attributed the responsibility of their success or failure to the teacher.

In other words, it is worth noting that pre-university readiness for autonomy in foreign language learning is doubted. As a continuum, this part of the paper aims at investigating university students' readiness for autonomous learning with a particular emphasis on the student of the Higher College for Teacher Training, English Department (Constantine).

In English learning at the university level, readiness is still doubted, and learner autonomy cannot be realized easily. University students in general and ENSC students in particular will undoubtedly have some problems in shifting their learning styles based on long-term traditional spoon-feeding methods, we assume. Accordingly, teachers' encouragements are highly required to boost those learners forward to 'autonomisation.'

However, teachers without any autonomy-oriented training cannot foster an autonomous culture. Thus, those teachers should be aware of the significance and necessity of learner autonomy so as to facilitate instilling it in their students' minds and implement such education in future classrooms. In turn, some critics state that autonomy is a western culture somehow alien in the Algerian socio-cultural context.

As a case study, we will investigate whether or not; students at the Higher College for Teacher Training of Constantine (ENSC) are ready to be involved in autonomous learning. We shall refer to their motivation level in learning English, learners' perceptions of their role and their teachers' responsibilities in learning and their use of English in the outside class activities.

As a teacher (in Higher College for Teacher Training of Constantine, ex-student there and ex-Secondary School teacher and through many interviews with other teachers and classroom observations and reports), I find that most ENSC students are aware of the importance to learn English and are theoretically ready to be involved in autonomous learning, but practically not. Most of the students there rely on their teachers' perceptions to things in doing their projects and classroom presentations.

Most of those students exercise great efforts to have pass marks and good averages, not to be autonomous as a student and as a future secondary or middle school teacher. Even in their 5th year research papers, those students are attached considerably to their supervisors in writing their essays.

Most of students at the Higher College for Teacher Training attribute their success or failure to their teachers. They cannot assume their responsibility mainly in their failure. Besides, as 5th or 4th Year trainees in the different schools attributed to in Constantine; those students depend a lot on their apply teachers in both preparing their teaching cards, lesson plans, teaching styles and writing reports.

Concerning their use of English outside the classroom, it is highly reflected the students' proficiency in using English. Findings show that the more students use English outside the classroom mainly the contribution in the different activities (in clubs, corners, magazines and cultural manifestations in English) the more students are self-confident, fluent and autonomous. Unfortunately, only a minority display concerns in these activities.

To sum up, the present study reveals that most students at the Higher College for Teacher Training seemed to have high motivation (as they have all elevated averages in the Baccalaureate exam) towards learning autonomously. However, they needed some training in many aspects, including test anxiety in project-presentations and speaking English in public. Besides, these students are required to forge their use of metacognitive strategies including self-monitoring and auto-assessment, which are considered as highly pivotal by many practitioners of 'autonomisation.'

In addition to that, students at the ENSC considered the teacher as more responsible for most of the tasks in the teaching-learning process. This attitude can be explained by the traditional pre-university education system these students were accustomed to before getting to the university level.

Moreover, the majority of students seemed to be spending very little time for out-of-class activities to improve their English as an integrative part to meet autonomous-learning habits. Nevertheless, all the notions mentioned above are essential in promoting autonomy in language university classrooms. Being familiar to these traditions at the pre-university level helps a lot enhancing readiness to autonomy at the university level.

2.2. Steps and Concepts to Learner Autonomy

In this part of the present paper, we will illustrate a theoretical paradigm or procedure met via progressive pursuit from dependence to autonomy. This is done by incorporating a series of steps. The first step revolves around giving learners a voice to make instructional goals quite clear for students themselves (qtd.in Nunan. "*Learning-Centered Communication* 85"). Teachers, at all levels, are required to make goals of their lessons and courses clear to students. Explicit goals facilitate active and autonomous learning. Learners, of their regardless of their aptitude or proficiency, should be able to involve in selecting their content, learning procedures and strategies. They should be responsible for their learning.

The second step according to Nunan again is to allow learners creating their goals. Due to this step, learners will be able to positively facilitate group cohesion towards a continuous independence in learning. The next step is to encourage learners to use the target language outside the classroom. Proficiency and mastering English in the Algerian context is so hard to be perfectly met. Learners, thus, are required to intensify their use of English outside the classroom. The fourth step is to elevate awareness of learning processes and procedures. It is worth noting that the learner should be given a voice in deciding what to learn and how to learn respectively. In this context, academic freedom requires both the Secondary School /University teachers to innovate ways that back his task as a "facilitator."

The fifth step is to train learners identify their favorable styles and strategies. Teachers, for instance, are required to implicitly offer their students a range of options to choose which might suit their concerns. The sixth step is to enhance spirit of

decision-making through giving students the right to have a voice in selecting. The aim behind this step is to instill and raise the notion of making choices in the Algerian student. The seventh step is to permit learners to output their tasks. Giving students the occasion to generate their own exercises within the classroom is a step towards enhancing both autonomy and creation.

The next step towards the promotion of 'autonomisation' is to foster learners to become teachers. This is a more challenging level. It is so pressing prospect of having the task of teachers for stimulating learning. To do so, those students-teachers can have the possibility to inspire hope in themselves, ignite and instill a love of learning in themselves and others. Assinder in his essay entitled *Peer teaching ,peer learning: one model*, states:

I believe that the goal of 'teaching each other' was a factor of an [essential significance]. Being asked to present something...is a responsibility...Being an expert on a topic noticeably increased self-esteem, and getting more confident week by week gave [the learners] a feeling of genuine progress (qtd.in Assinder 228)

Martin Dansky, a journalist and writer, states the following: "teaching is useless unless you learn from your students." In the same context, the Latin proverb says: "By learning you will teach; by teaching you will understand." Add to this, James Howell, A Welsh Historian, said once: "We learn by teaching." Thus, teaching and learning should always be viewed interwoven in both their essence.

Finally, students should also be encouraged to become language researchers. In this context, Brew said: "Involving students in inquiry-in research is a way of improving their learning..." Besides, Prosser said: "It is not teaching but the student experience that should be the focus of the teaching –research nexus." Boyer referred to the same issue by saying: "The time has come to move beyond the tired old teaching versus research debate" (xii). Brew in Jenkins et al added: "Involving students in inquiry-in research-is a way of improving their learning, activating them more...Bringing research and teaching together is a way of enhancing the motivation of both academics and students." Conducting research is a way to quest, to doubt, to analyze, to synthesize, to evaluate, to produce and to create. Having an accomplishment through learning is a very impressive factor that pushes students forward towards active learning.

To bring this part into close, it is very significant to articulate a vision of foreign language learning through 'autonomisation.' This tradition argues for an active partnership between teachers and learners. This supposed harmonious connection can only and effectively become a reality if learners are knowledgeable enough, and skilful sufficiently to play a vital role in planning, implementing and evaluating their learning. These steps are prescribed just to introduce learners towards exercising their 'autonomous' learning.

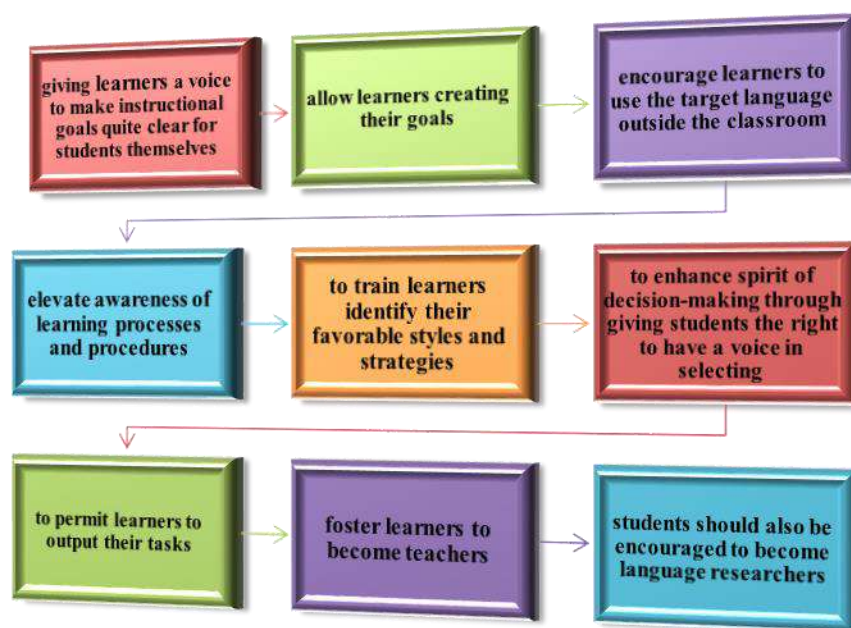


Figure 3: Steps and Concepts to Learner Autonomy

2.4. Promoting Learners' Autonomy. Prominent Concerns and Underlying Constraints

Promoting an autonomous learning environment and changing a teacher-centered classroom to that of student-centered one is a gradual process that will take time, training and patience. Many prominent concerns and underlying constraints should be explored to meet “autonomisation” in learning English as a foreign language.

Some of the factors that have been already referred to by experts in the field such Simon Borg and Salah Al-Busaidi from the School of Education, University of Leeds and Language Centre, Sultan Qaboos University respectively. Some “Fossilized teachers” find it so hard to relinquish control and give up lecturing habits.

Some other teachers believed that while “autonomisation” is useful for some students, it is not for some others. According to the teachers interviewed while preparing the study, only highly motivated and clever students would meet autonomy, whereas limited expectations would be attributed to others. To my mind, students' habits of being spoon-fed learners cannot be easily rejected. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a transitional period during which students should claim their rightful position in the teaching-learning process; they should claim “autonomy” by deeds and research not just words and hopes.

Furthermore, lack of teacher autonomy resulted from blind dependence to some prescribed curricula and materials. The teacher, therefore, is required to enhance research-teaching nexus by innovating his methods, techniques and tools of research to better his lectures and courses and let them more efficient and inspiring.

The impact of Inspiring teaching might result in learners to develop an interest in language learning and put extra effort into being more autonomous in learning; the

extra effort might generate a sense of progress and evolution. The latter builds self-confidence that inevitably pushed forward to “autonomisation.”

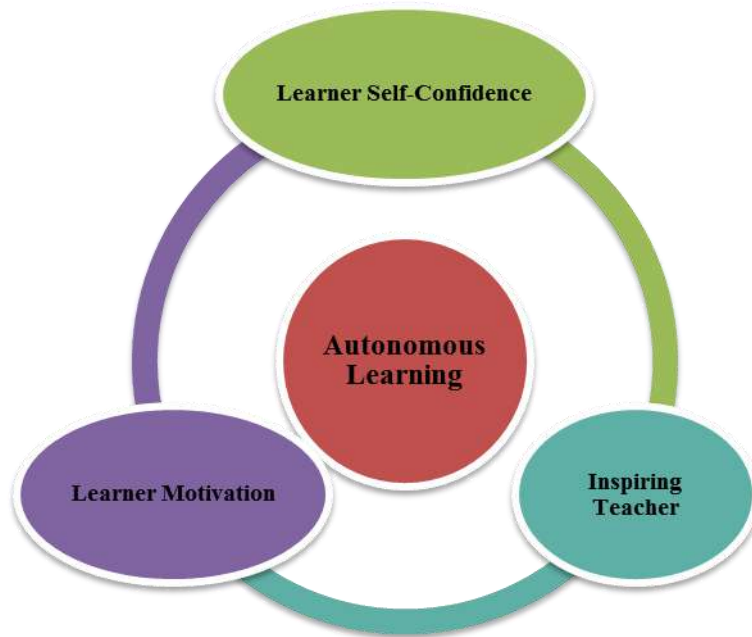


Figure 4: Learner-teacher perception to causal links

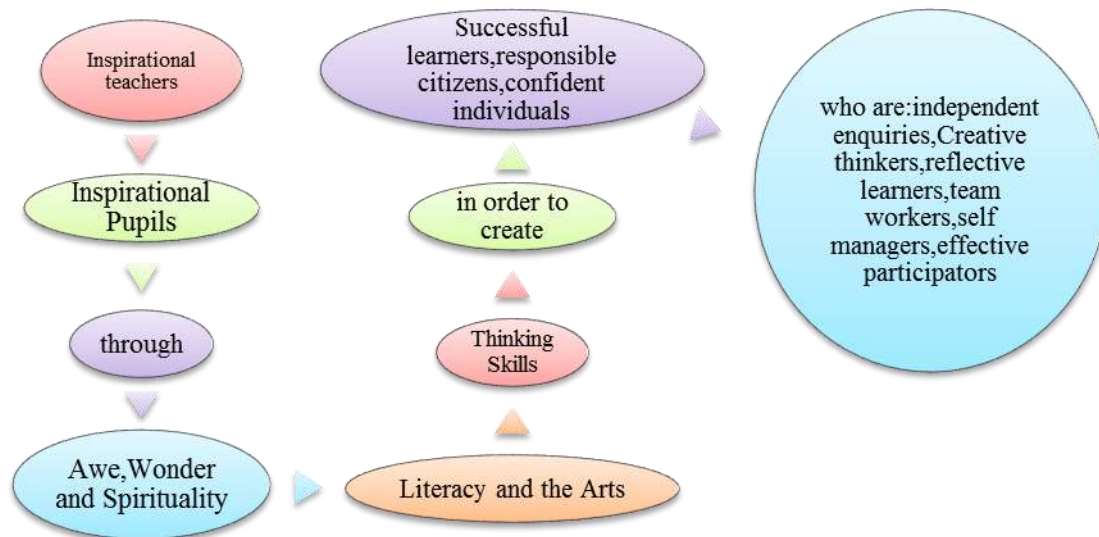


Figure5: Inspirational teachers, inspirational pupils

(Ryan 16)

Another constraint that hinders learners to be autonomous is their limited proficiency in English and their inability to exploit resources. The higher the students’ proficiency in English, the more autonomy the students have. Overall, interviews conducted and research findings show that autonomy is associated with higher levels of proficiency.

Learners' proficiency is at stake mainly because most of those learners have limited contact with native speakers and English outside the classroom. Though English and American media play a fundamental role in letting the Algerian student in touch with English (developing the listening skill...), it is not sufficient to him or her to interact in real situations using the target language (Algerian students are rarely involved in English-speaking/Anglophone corners, clubs, magazines and other cultural activities)

Among the other factors hindering autonomy, is the lack of motivation and incentive among the Algerian learner. Most of them are passive and learn just to have a pass mark. This habit, they argue, is caused by the hard conditions and circumstances they live in their university environment.

Learners' lack of facilities and previous experiences of autonomous learning causes a terrible headache for them to 'innovate' and 'enhance' new strategies of learning. Limited space and setting within the curriculum is another institutional factor that hinders the extent to which autonomy might be promoted.

To bring close to this element, it is worth noting that such challenges, concerns and constraints related to teachers, teachers and the institution. Despite the fact that teachers feel greatly that the institutional challenges (curriculum and the university environment) did obstruct the rate to which they could promote learner autonomy, most of the other issues are pertinent to the learners' and teachers' readiness, attitudes, abilities, knowledge and motivation. Therefore, being torn between "desirability" to meet "autonomisation" and its possible "feasibility" is another underlying concern that would be progressively examined.

General Conclusion

After the analysis of some data obtained from different references using a set of exploratory methods, content analysis and research synthesis techniques, conducting interviews, observation sheets and classroom reports as tools of the study, the hypotheses referred to above were approved. To confirm those hypotheses, we also explore a case study with students and University and associate Secondary School Teachers.

The findings of this paper show that university (ENSC) students cannot practically get rid of over-reliance on and over-dependency to their teachers, despite the fact that they show theoretical motivation to be autonomous. Among the reasons behind their attitudes, the traditions inherited from their secondary school education. Being Unready to be autonomous was also obtained from teacher's methods. Keeping traditional practices and resisting reform and change frequently prevent teachers from promoting new approaches to learning.

Additionally, the Algerian EFL classroom in both Secondary Schools and Universities contributes significantly in preserving old approaches to teaching and learning. Over-crowded classes and lack of incentive to exercise autonomous traditions to teaching are among the reasons behind implementing new theories and paradigms to teaching and learning. Furthermore, the curriculum imposed to be taught can suit neither change nor 'autonomisation'.

To conclude, one might say that the educational reform, the LMD university reform is likely to be significant when it is based on the collaboration of teachers,

students and authorities where shared vision should be built to shape autonomous pupils and students to become productive citizens.

Suggestions and Recommendations for Further Research

Indeed, this paper would spark another hotly-controversial debate on how to make the Algerian educational system and the Algerian university more active to form creative and productive citizens.

To do so, the current body provides some suggestions and recommendations to teachers, students and researchers.

1. Autonomous learning is new EFL approach. In this approach, the focus should be on the learner. The latter should be aware about his responsibility in the new learning process. Therefore, the curriculum should suite that change. The curriculum unit should go beyond surface objectives and design more tasks and materials to enhance autonomous learning. Secondary teachers, thus, should not use the text book blindly. University teachers , for instance, should enhance a research-teaching nexus; they are required to enhance action research in their classrooms by providing compulsory tasks like project presentations, portfolio, journal writing which will push the students forwards to be autonomous. Furthermore, target culture can be taught through new techniques that emphasize significantly on the student perception to the notion. These techniques include Culture Capsulesⁱ, Culture Clustersⁱⁱ , Culture Assimilatorsⁱⁱⁱ, The Mini Drama/ Mini Skit^{iv}
2. The learner should be motivated and informed about the importance of autonomous learning.
3. Certain factors should be available to facilitate ‘autonomisation’ such as learners training to find out the appropriate learning strategies to better implementing these new approaches to learning. Preparing learners for more responsibilities in his learning process.
4. Both secondary school and University EFL teachers are required to get rid of ‘fossilized’ teaching styles. In the Algerian EFL context, Higher Colleges for Teacher Training should play a fundamental role in preparing students-future teachers to develop autonomous teaching styles and philosophies of education (teaching methods and style stem from a specific philosophy of education).

Appendices/Tools of Research

Appendix 1: Interview with Associate Secondary School Teachers, ex-Secondary School Teachers who are now ENSC teachers

Facts in brief about the interviewees

Many interviews were conducted at the ENSC; Department of English, mainly with University teachers who were secondary school teachers and associate teachers ; they experienced the paper’s underlying concerns in both cycles.

A paradigm of these interviews was divided into three sections according to three main points of discussion. In the first section that contained three questions we asked about the definition of both learning and teaching in the Algerian context (Algerian Educational system and University)

In the second section we asked about the definitions of pertinent terms to learner autonomy and the third section is devoted to shed the light on the readiness of both teachers and students to autonomous learning and the different constraints and challenges that obstruct university teachers to enhance 'autonomisation'

The Interview (paradigm)

SECTION ONE

Q.1: Could you tell us about your educational experience in Algerian schools as a pupil?

Answer:

Q.2: Speaking about your experience as a teacher of English in the Secondary School from ... to ... how was your experience with teaching English as a Foreign English?

What were your teaching styles?

- a. Explicit or implicit
- b. teacher-centered or learner-centered

Answer:

Q.3: What is the definition of learning in Algerian philosophy of education after the 'reform'?

Answer Q.3:

Q.4: What is the definition of teaching according to the Algerian philosophy of education after the 'reform'?

Answer Q.4:

SECTION TWO:

Q.5: What is autonomous learning according to you in both the pre-university and university cycles?

Answer Q.5:

Q.6: Do you think that EFL learners are ready to be autonomous in learning in both the Secondary School and University?

Answer Q.6:

Argue why?

Q.7: Do you think that EFL teachers in both Secondary/University cycles are appropriately and significantly enhancing autonomous learning?

Answer Q.7:

Argue why?

Q.8: Do you think that Algerian EFL teachers in both Secondary/University cycles are ready to work in autonomous EFL classroom?

Answer Q.8:

Argue why?

SECTION THREE

Q.9. According to you, what are the current challenges and constraints that face University teachers in the promotion of autonomous classrooms?

Answer Q.9.

Q.10. What suggestions and recommendation you would expose to enhance the Algerian learner's autonomy effectively?

Answer Q.10.

Thank You for Your Collaboration

The Teacher's Interview (1)

Mrs.ZARZI.M

SECTION ONE

Q.1: Could you tell us about your educational experience in Algerian schools as a pupil?

Answer: My educational experience in the Algerian Secondary School "Lycée El Hourriya" (Constantine) as a pupil was great! As a learner I was always eager to attend English classes to learn more.

Q.2: Speaking about your experience as a teacher of English in the Secondary School from 1975 to 2005 in a state school and from 2007 to 2014 in a private school how was your experience with teaching English as a Foreign English?

What were your teaching styles?

- a. Explicit or implicit
- b. teacher-centered or learner-centered

Answer: I had to follow the programs set by the Algerian Ministry of Education. At first the teaching styles were explicit. The book used was "Practice and Progress" L.G.Alexander. Then we had to work with books based on the Functional Approach for the "First" years (1AS) and the Thementical Approach for the "Third" years (3AS). The teaching styles were implicit and learner-centered. The reform deals with the Competency Based Approach. The books used are "At the Crossroads" for (1AS), "Getting Through" for (2AS), and "New Prospects" for (3AS). The teaching styles remain implicit and learner-centered.

Q.3: What is the definition of learning in Algerian philosophy of education after the 'reform'?

Answer Q.3: The Competency Based Approach is meant to let the learner identify and develop his own competencies to take profit from them in his future life.

Q.4: What is the definition of teaching according to the Algerian philosophy of education after the 'reform'?

Answer Q.4: With the Competency Based Approach the teacher has to help the learner identify his own competencies and develop them.

Section two:

Q.5: What is autonomous learning according to you in both the pre-university and university cycles?

Answer Q.5: Autonomous learning in both the pre-university and university cycles should be based on the needs of the learner and his objectives.

Q.6: Do you think that EFL learners are ready to be autonomous in learning in both the Secondary School and University?

Answer Q.6: I think they should be.

Argue why? They have learnt English as a foreign Language. Having acquired the main principles of the language they can manage to go further in their studies.

Q.7: Do you think that EFL teachers in both Secondary/University cycles are appropriately and significantly enhancing autonomous learning?

Answer Q.7: No.

Argue why? Teaching in State/University cycles EFL teachers have to teach according to the programs set by the Ministry of Education, but they can manage to enhance autonomous learning.

Q.8: Do you think that Algerian EFL teachers in both Secondary/University cycles are ready to work in autonomous EFL classroom?

Answer Q.8: Yes.

Argue why? They will be free to deal with their classroom according to their needs and not with an official program.

SECTION THREE

Q.9. According to you, what are the current challenges and constraints that face University teachers in the promotion of autonomous classrooms?

Answer Q.9. In Algeria all universities are state ones so it will be difficult to promote autonomous classrooms.

Q.10. What do you suggest and recommend to enhance learner's autonomy in the Algerian EFL classrooms?

Answer Q.10. To enhance learner's autonomy in the Algerian EFL classrooms teachers should not be obliged to follow official programs. They should be to teach according to the needs of the learner.

Thank You for Your Collaboration

The Teacher's Interview (2)

Mr. FERRANI.R

SECTION ONE

Q.1: Could you tell us about your educational experience in Algerian schools as a pupil?

Answer: We were given an excellent education since we were taught by experienced and skilled teachers.

Q.2: Speaking about your experience as a teacher of English in the Secondary School from 1986 to 2012 how was your experience with teaching English as a Foreign Language?

What were your teaching styles?

- c. Explicit or implicit
- d. teacher-centered or learner-centered

Answer: Explicit and learner-centered at the same time. To stimulate learning and involve the learners in the skills to be taught

Q.3: What is the definition of learning in Algerian philosophy of education after the 'reform'?

Answer Q.3: To be able to live authentic situations (the know-how)

To be able to express freely one's views and to understand/accept others' views

Q.4: What is the definition of teaching according to the Algerian philosophy of education after the 'reform'?

Answer Q.4:

To prepare learners to self-learning (initiative research), to be able to assimilate and transmit learning to others.

SECTION TWO:

Q.5: What is autonomous learning according to you in both the pre-university and university cycles?

Answer Q.5: It is probably learning through 'competencies' in which all actors are involved

Q.6: Do you think that EFL learners are ready to be autonomous in learning in both the Secondary School and University. Argue why?

Answer Q.6:

They can be ready to be so thanks to 'specific' teachers using the task-based approach (according to the educational syllabus) and when there is continuity at the university which till today delivers a 'theoretical' teaching/learning

Q.7: Do you think that EFL teachers in both Secondary/University cycles are appropriately and significantly enhancing autonomous learning? Argue why?

Answer Q.7:

The educational syllabus in Secondary school encourages an autonomous learning, but not really at the university where we are concerned by 'knowledge' acquisition and not how to deal with this or that.

Q.8: Do you think that Algerian EFL teachers in both Secondary/University cycles are ready to work in autonomous EFL classroom?

Answer Q.8:

Argue why?

Yes precisely at the ENS since they send trainees in secondary schools to be taken in charge by teachers there! This can be the link or the bridge so that the two parties collaborate

Section three

Q.9. According to you, what are the current challenges and constraints that face University teachers in the promotion of autonomous classrooms?

Answer Q.9.

Inadequate programmes/learners' mentality that prevent them from autonomous learning/large classes which turn the teaching/learning process difficult.

Q.10. What do you suggest and recommend to enhance learner's autonomy in the Algerian EFL classrooms?

Answer Q.10.

- Adequate teachers(well-trained/continuously-trained)
- Smaller pedagogical groups (12 to 15 pupils)
- Pedagogical supports to facilitate the teaching/learning process such as means of communication(computers, CD's)
- The promotion of programmes that suit pupils'/students' needs ...

Thank You for Your Collaboration

Analysis:

Our interview with both Mrs.ZARZI and Mr.FERRANI confirmed the assumption and consolidated the arguments we set in the present paper. Throughout their personal and professional experiences in both Secondary and University cycles, we had concrete evidence that Algerian philosophies of education, teaching styles, learning strategies and traditions based on explicit deliverance of knowledge and absolute domination of the teachers. Theoretically speaking and despite the eagerness

and readiness to enhance learner-based approaches to teaching/learning, the field of education is still overwhelmed by traditional methods and spoon-feeding styles.

First, concerning the definition of learning and teaching, both teachers emphasize the necessity to consider learners' needs in teaching/learning process. Both teachers mention that traditional teaching/learning methods continue to have the lion's share in the educational programmes in the three grades and especially at the university level. Thus, as stated in both interviews, the Competency-based Approach promoted theoretically cannot be applied efficiently because of the constraints face teachers, learners and even school legislators. Competencies targeted through learning cannot be met in such situations.

The second section discussed in the interview revolves around Autonomous learning. According to Mrs.ZARZI in both the pre-university and university cycles 'should be based on the needs of the learner and his objectives'. Mr.FERRANI gives the following definition 'It is probably learning through 'competencies' in which all actors are involved'. That is, the interviewees refer to 'needs', 'objectives' and 'competencies' in autonomous learning. Accordingly, the teaching-learning process should pinpoint needs of the learner, precise objectives of the educational process and point out the competencies at the end of both secondary and university cycles.

The third point discussed in the interview was about the readiness of the actors in teaching/learning process; the constraints and challenges face those actors to meet autonomy. Besides, some recommendations will be presented for further considerations in the field. Concerning readiness, Mrs.ZARZI said 'yes' and Mr.FERRANI said: 'they can be, providing the suitable application of the task-based approach.' Many constraints and challenges were mentioned in the interview. All actors in the educational process take a share in these constraints and play contributing roles in the ill-application of 'autonomous learning'.

According to the interviewees, these challenges include 'the blind application of the curriculum', 'inadequate programmes and learners' mentality that prevent them from autonomous learning/large classes which turn the teaching/learning process difficult'. Other constraints, issues and challenges had been referred to in our theoretical study.

Concerning the recommendations suggested by the interviewees, all revolve around the promotion of adequate teachers(well-trained/continuously-trained),smaller pedagogical groups (12 to 15 pupils),pedagogical supports to facilitate the teaching/learning process such as means of communication and the promotion of programmes that suit pupils'/students' needsOther recommendations mentioned in the theoretical part of the present paper.

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NOTES

ⁱ These are one of the methods for teaching culture in EFL classes. A culture capsule is a brief description of one aspect of the TLC as compared with the NC. This contrast between the two cultures is often provided by the teacher, but it is preferable to be pointed out from the students' knowledge. Elizabeth and Bronwyn illustrate this by:

Students can be presented with objects (e.g. figurine, tools, jewellery, art) or images that originate from the Target Culture. **The students are then responsible for finding information about the item in question, either by conducting research being given clues to investigate. They can either write a brief summary or make an oral presentation to the class about the cultural relevance of items.** (2)

Therefore, culture capsules involve not only learners' knowledge about the FC but also their abilities in discoursing orally and in writing.

ⁱⁱ **Culture clusters** consist of three or more interrelated culture capsules on pertinent themes in the FC. As an illustration, breakfast is typical; it can be divided into three culture capsules: time (when to have breakfast), form (what to have in breakfast) and agents (who and with whom to have breakfast). Culture clusters are good methods for giving students knowledge and awareness of several cultural aspects, but they generally do not use much emotional empathy. Students should take part in these clusters.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Culture Assimilators** are set to be short descriptions of an incident or situation where an interaction must take place between at least one person from the TC and persons from the NC. Teachers' choice of situations is based on the possibility that they may be misinterpreted by students. Teachers give a follow up to these previous descriptions in the form of four possible choices about the meaning of the actions or words of the participants in the interaction, students' task are to choose the correct one. Culture assimilators generally end in a brief discussion of why certain interpretations are favoured at the expense of others.

^{iv}

Mini drama is a set of scenes/skits (from three to five) of everyday life which depict situations of cultural miscommunication. Each skit is followed by a discussion after being acted out, viewed on a video or read in handouts... Teachers manage the discussion in class but should avoid making judgements (prejudge) about the situations or the characters but convincing students to accept the behaviours in the situation performed by participants in the Foreign Culture as being other forms besides theirs (in the Native Culture). The main outcome after using a mini drama technique is the promotion of knowledge and understanding of the FC (no reinforcement of stereotypes, prejudices and 'otherness').