11-10-2017 11:00 AM

Language Learner Autonomy in Ontario's ESL Context

Alireza Mousavi Arfae, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Dr. Julie Byrd Clark, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education

Abstract

Since its emergence in the early 1980's, the notion of learner autonomy has not only become a buzzword in second language education literature but a revolutionary phenomenon affecting teaching/learning approaches across the world. A great number of countries have adopted measures to promote learner autonomy in their language schools. In Europe, for instance, the Council of Europe developed the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) with the explicit goal of developing language learner autonomy (Little, 2007). In Canada, following the introduction of Manitoba Collaborative Language Portfolio Assessment (CLPA), very recently Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) has been introduced and gradually implemented in government-funded ESL programs across the country (Pettis, 2014) to realize the same goal.

Given its importance, this study investigated the present status of the promotion of language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. To this end, through a mixed methods research design using interviews and surveys, the study explored the perceptions of ESL teacher trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners. Based on David Little's comprehensive theory of language learner autonomy (2009), the study presents a thorough understanding of participants' perceptions of the construct of learner autonomy, desirability, feasibility, and challenges of promoting learner autonomy, its contribution to second language learning and teachers' roles in the context. The study furthers delves into the perceptions of introduction, and implementation of PBLA and discusses its shortcomings and advantages. It further suggests implications for practice regarding the promotion of language learner autonomy.

Keywords: Language Learner autonomy, English as a Second Language (ESL), Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA), Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)

Dedication

To my beloved wife, Maryam

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I wish to thank my wonderful supervisor, Dr. Julie Byrd Clark. Indeed, words fail to do justice when I try to describe how supportive she has been throughout all these years. She has been a true inspiration guiding me through the difficulties of my journey as a PhD student. The invaluable insights I received from her, were not only vital in helping me realize my dream here at Western University, but an endowment I will carry on forever. Thank you so much Dr. Byrd. I do not want this to sound like a cliché, but it was truly a blessing to have you as my supervisor.

Special thanks to my committee members, Dr. Susan Majhanovich and Dr. Shelley Taylor whose guidance made this day possible. A day that seemed so far away for the most part of my journey. Your insightful comments helped shape my worldview, enriched my understanding and expanded my grasp of reality. Many thanks to you. I will proudly remain indebted to you.

I wish to thank my family, mom, dad, and my brother Amir for all their continuing support, and good wishes that helped me stand where I am today.

Finally, a very special thanks to my better half, my beloved wife Maryam who has been there for me through thick and thin, through all moments of joy and despair. Her love has nourished my life and undoubtedly made a better human being. Thank you for being there.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background and Significance of the Study

The quest for new approaches aimed at facilitating and realizing language learning led to the development of the notion of learner autonomy born out of teacher-researchers' action research at the Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues (CRAPEL), University of Nancy, France, in the 1970s. It was not until a few years later, however, that the term was coined and made more popular by Henri Holec in 1981 in his work for the Council of Europe (Smith, 2008). Holec defined learner autonomy as the ability to take control over one's learning (Holec, 1981). It is also described as a "capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (Little, 1991, p. 4). Holec (2008) suggests that since its inception, learner autonomy has, along with the shifts from linguistic to communicative competence, behavioristic to cognitive description of acquisition, and teacher-centered to student-centered approaches, revolutionized pedagogical practices and principles leading to the birth of an entirely new educational paradigm in language pedagogy. Indeed, Holec argues that learner autonomy has now become a 'fully-fledged' (Holec, 2008, p. 3) alternative that helps the development of learning competence and capacitates self-directed learning.

The increasing inclusion of learner autonomy in the languages curriculum at the school, college and university levels around the world along with the ensuing political, economic, social and pedagogical changes (Lamb, 2008, p.270), highlights the significance of further research on different aspects of learner autonomy. The Council of Europe developed the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio with a primary goal of developing language learner autonomy (Little, 2007). The portfolio and the shift

towards learner autonomy have been embraced by many European countries (Lamb, 2008). In 2007, the ministry of education in China issued college English curriculum requirements urging colleges across the country to develop and adopt a teaching model that helps foster language learner autonomy (Fumin & Lee, 2012). In Canada, following the introduction of Manitoba Collaborative Language Portfolio Assessment (CLPA), very recently Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) has been introduced and implemented in government-funded ESL programs across the country including the province of Ontario (Pettis, 2014). There are examples of several other states such as Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Japan, as well as a number of middle-eastern countries including Iran and Turkey adopting measures to develop language learner autonomy as a facilitator of language learning (Lamb, 2008).

The plethora of the recent literature on learner autonomy including books such as Lamb & Reinders (2006), Barfield & Brown (2007), Benson (2007), Lamb & Reinders (2008), Hurd & Lewis (2008), Pemberton, Toogood & Barfield (2009) among many others is a sign of the maturity of the field and how it has become appreciated by the world academia at large (Aoki et al., 2009).

The advancement of technology including mobile technologies, computers, and the internet has served as yet another major contributor to the growing attention and substantial development of learner autonomy in recent years. Technology has provided the learners not only with a much wider access to resources but also "affordances for autonomous learning" (Reinders and White, 2011, pp. 2) such as support for learning, interaction and situated learning. According to Godwin Jones (2007), the dramatic increase in online resources, network services, and educational software, together provide new opportunities for self-directed learning. In the last few years, developments in mobile technology and the explosion in social media use have

accelerated the level of interest in both learner autonomy and language learning. In the same vein, Benson and Chik (2010) suggest that the new technologies offer the potential for autonomous language learning, especially in the context of "globalized online spaces" (Benson & Chik, 2010, p. 63). These online spaces include websites such as Flickr, YouTube, and FanFiction.net, etc. where it is possible to share and discuss a range of digital artifacts (Hafner and Miller, 2011).

Although most accounts refer to Holec's 1981 definition of learner autonomy as learners taking charge of their own learning (Godwin-Jones, 2007), the multifaceted nature of learner autonomy (Collentine, 2011) brings about confusions vis-a-vis the interpretations and the relevant terminology associated with learner autonomy. Citing Benson (2001) and Sinclair (2006), Hafner and Miller (2011) suggest that learner autonomy can mean different things to different people. Benson (2007) elaborates on some existing differences regarding the diverse perceptions of learner autonomy over its levels and degrees. In other words, the consensus on the general meaning of learner autonomy does not conceal the diversity of the associated interpretations with regards to its operationalization and measurement (Reinders and White, 2011). Reinders describes the opaqueness of language learner autonomy as an additional problem that may cause operationalization problems (Reinders, 2011). For instance, the importance attached to learners' voices, learner-centeredness, and learners' relative freedom might be misconstrued by the teachers as contextual constraints (Lamb, 2008), with teachers developing the feeling that their role is on the decline (Fumin & Lee, 2012). These negative impressions might ultimately lead to the teachers forming some degree of resistance toward the promotion of language learner autonomy (Wong, 2010). This is precisely why in promoting language learner autonomy teachers take on an even more important role (Trebbi, 2008; Dam,

2011). On another relevant note, language learner autonomy is at times wrongfully translated as learning in isolation, completely independent of the classroom and teacher. Such a misconstrued interpretation obviates the need for teacher's support and instruction (Hafner and Miller, 2011). As Dam (2011) however duly notes, nothing could be farther from the truth. The existence of such colorful conceptions as well as misconceptions about language learner autonomy along with the undeniable impact of one's beliefs upon their behaviors including educational ones further depict the importance of exploring perceptions of the promotion of language learner autonomy. The research presents an investigation of the current status of the promotion of language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. To realize the study objectives, I explored the perceptions held by TESL trainers, ESL instructors and ESL learners on the topic. These perceptions are at least partially accountable for shaping the status quo with regards to the development of language learner autonomy. In what follows, I will further expound on my research goals and the significance of the study.

Statement of the Problem

As evidenced by the relevant literature referenced in the study, the development of language learner autonomy in learners produces significant positive results with regards to the learning experience of L2 learners. How a context in practice, however, responds to the pedagogical implications recommended by such research remains another equally important and challenging issue. For example, are teachers encouraged to promote language learner autonomy by TESL trainers? Do teachers use specific strategies to help develop language learner autonomy in learners? What kinds of perceptions are held by TESL trainers, teachers and learners about the development of language learner autonomy? To paint a comprehensive portrayal of the current status of the development of language learner autonomy, a study needs to delve into perceptions

held by those involved in the context, since the perceptions and beliefs can be regarded as molds that shape and form individuals' behaviors and choices including their educational ones. The views toward language learner autonomy as will be discussed shortly are context and culture-bound. As referenced in this research, a number of such studies reflecting such views have been conducted in different parts of the world. With regards to the ESL context in Canada, upon a meticulous study of the relevant literature, I noticed an existing gap in research on the development of language learner autonomy in learners. Although there have been a number studies conducted on the perceptions about the development of language learner autonomy in different parts of the world, none has been conducted in the abovementioned context, and by extension in Ontario, Canada. Furthermore, the majority of those studies have failed to provide a comprehensive picture as they mostly focus on one single group of either ESL teachers or learners with TESL trainers largely neglected. Also, the majority of such studies were conducted in contexts with policies and practices already established to develop language learner autonomy in learners. Such an undertaking would not produce an understanding of the actual practices in the ESL context.

Given the diversity of the theoretical perspectives along with the misconceptions about language learner autonomy, it is important to explore learners' and instructors' perceptions if the researcher is to answer the questions pertaining to autonomous learning (Wong, 2010). Phipps and Borg (2007), and Wedell (2009), Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) among others argue that language learner autonomy is well established in the teacher education literature, and equally emphasize that teachers' beliefs inform and shape their way of teaching and their educational choices. Strategies devised to improve teachers' instruction, therefore, need to take into consideration an insight into teachers' perceptions and beliefs about language pedagogy (Wedell,

2009). The extensive literature on language learner autonomy includes several studies conducted in different parts of the world with the aim of exploring teachers' and/or learners' perceptions of language learner autonomy. Reference can be made to the works of Alibakhshi et al. (2015); Lai et al. (2015), Ng et al. (2015); Szőcs (2015); Yamaguchi & Hori (2015); Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012); Wong (2010), Fumin & Lee (2012), among many others. As Wong (2010) concurs with many other scholars in the field, language learner autonomy is highly context- as well as culture-bound because of the differences that culture and context can make in educational processes (Watkins and Biggs, 1996). Wong (2010) highlights the differences between the 'Chinese' and the 'Western' contexts and points to 'cultural resistance' to autonomous learning in the wider context of Hong Kong, which embodies the Chinese culture. Such cultural and contextual differences may well exist among the people belonging to different cultures. Teachers' and learners' perceptions are naturally shaped within the specific context where they grow. Barcelos emphasizes the importance of context, culture, and milieu upon the language Instructors' and learners' perceptions and argues that an understanding of the learners' beliefs is akin to "understanding their world and their identity" (Barcelos, 2003, p. 8).

The importance of exploring learners' perceptions is further highlighted in Bandura's proposition (1977) suggesting how individuals perceive their abilities and capabilities affects both their performance as well as the cognitive and affective processes involved in materializing their desired goals.

Research Purpose, Context and Rationale

Researcher's personal rationale and positioning.

Positioning. As a language teacher with more than 15 years of teaching experience, I had always been enthusiastically seeking ways to help motivate learners to improve their language skills. I believe it is a perpetual endeavor on the part of any conscientious teacher to help learners learn more efficiently and effectively. It was indeed during my Master's program that I learned about language learner autonomy through reading seminal articles of prominent figures in the field including David Little (1991, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2009b), Leni Dam (1995, 2011) and Phil Benson (2006, 2007, 2010, 2013). In spite of the initial reluctance in welcoming the concept, as is the case in many instances owing to the misconceptions associated with language learner autonomy, upon reading up on the subject I soon became enchanted by it, especially by learning that according to Dam (1995, 2011) learner autonomy takes care of the motivation problem and facilitates lifelong learning. In fulfillment of my Master's degree in English Language Teaching (ELT) I conducted research on the impact of developing language learner autonomy and critical thinking on EFL learners' oral proficiency in the EFL context in Iran. The findings of the study made me even more interested in the field both in the theoretical and practical levels. Upon starting the Ph.D. program in Education under the insightful supervision of Dr. Julie Byrd Clark at the University of Western Ontario, I chose to pursue my passion to learn how Ontario's ESL context has responded to the growing need for developing language learner autonomy in language learners.

References can be made to a number of studies in the Canadian context conducted to explore perceptions of the promotion of learner autonomy through the implementation of

systems such as the CEFR or European Language Portfolio (ELP) that help materialize the aforesaid goal in controlled environments. These studies include Faez, Majhanovich, Taylor, Smith, & Crowley (2011); Hermans (2012); Kristmanson, Lafargue, & Culligan (2011, 2013); Vandergrift (2006); Wernicke & Bournot-Trites (2011), among others. However, as Kristmanson, Lafargue, & Culligan (2013) suggest the bulk of these studies contribute to the existing and flourishing literature on the positive impact of the development of language learner autonomy and the teachers' and/or learners' personal feelings toward it in a controlled environment where language learner autonomy is being promoted. And as Dam (2011) suggests, properly promoted, the development of language learner autonomy can have very positive results helping learners gain not only a high communicative proficiency, but also develop enhanced self-esteem, acquire an evaluative competence of self and others, learn how to learn and accept responsibility, gain social competence by experiencing social forms of learning, and prepare for lifelong learning. Nonetheless, albeit relevant, the enthusiasm shown by academia to the notion of developing language learner autonomy and even conducting research on its impact upon language learning experience cannot be construed as a study of what is actually happening in a given context. Realizing the gap, my research will undertake the challenge of exploring the Canadian ESL environment in Ontario for its largest population of new immigrants and by extension ESL learners to study the current status of the promotion of language learner autonomy in the context.

Context.

With regards to the context of the study, I chose the adult ESL context in the province of Ontario, Canada. Ontario houses the largest population of new immigrants in the country by a wide margin. A considerable number of these immigrants need to improve their language

proficiency. The adult ESL context of the study is divided into two major contexts of government-funded, and private. The distinction has very recently become more distinguishable as a result of the introduction of a new approach by the federal government known as portfolio-based language assessment (PBLA) with the explicit aim of developing language learner autonomy. Every language school receiving government funding is required to implement PBLA. A thorough explanation of the PBLA is presented in Chapter 2. The private adult ESL context, however, is not bound to implement PBLA and for the most part colleges and ESL schools apply their own curricula. The private ESL context has learners from different strata but mostly new immigrants and international students who aim at learning English as a gateway to higher education in the country.

I intentionally excluded the English language learners, ELL students in schools, based on the assumption that the possible dissimilarities of the teaching/learning approaches employed in schools as opposed to adult ESL context, along with the age factor impact arising from participants' maturity and the formation of their perceptions of the abstract construct of learner autonomy would negatively impact the outcomes of the study. The study venue consisted of three ESL colleges and two government-funded ESL schools offering ESL programs for adult ESL learners. I tried to include both PBLA and non-PBLA contexts in my study to present a comprehensive portrayal of the adult ESL context in Ontario.

Purpose. Given the significance of language learner autonomy as highlighted above, the study explored the current status of the promotion of language learner autonomy in the ESL context in Ontario, Canada. The research was based on the perceptions of participants of the study of the development of language learner autonomy. The participants, TESL trainers, instructors, and learners of English as a second language (ESL), were randomly selected from

various colleges and language schools across the province of Ontario, Canada. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews (TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners) and questionnaires (ESL learners only). The interviews and the questionnaire were tailored to elicit responses from research participants about their perceptions of the promotion of language learner autonomy, its desirability, feasibility, challenges, contribution to L2 learning, and teachers' roles. Data interpretation and analysis using both qualitative and quantitative means helped present a thorough understanding of the current status of the development of language learner autonomy along with the participants' perceptions about it in Ontario's ESL context. In other words, the study aimed at exploring where the ESL context in Ontario stood with regards to the development of language learner autonomy.

Research Questions

Based on the perceptions of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners, I aimed to explore how Ontario's ESL context had responded to the growing need for the promotion of language learner autonomy. To study the current status of the promotion of language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context my research explored the following questions:

RQ1: What does 'language learner autonomy' mean to English language TESL trainers, instructors, and learners in Ontario's ESL context?

RQ2: To what extent, according to the participants of the study, does the promotion of learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?

RQ3: How desirable and feasible do TESL trainers and ESL instructors feel it is to promote learner autonomy?

RQ4. What challenges do teachers in Ontario's ESL context face in helping their learners become more autonomous?

RQ5. What roles do teachers assume in ESL classrooms in relation to the promotion of language learner autonomy?

The study is of value to TESL trainers, ESL teachers, ESL learners, curriculum designers, and material developers as it presents a thorough understanding of the current status of promoting language learner autonomy and perceptions about it in Ontario's ESL context.

Researcher's philosophy

Researchers need a philosophy as a foundation housing the philosophical assumptions to direct and conduct their research. Creswell and Clark (2011) highlight four worldviews with regards to research as suggested by Crotty (1998), namely postpositivist, constructivist, participatory and pragmatist. It should be noted however that as Creswell and Clark (2011) remark the use of these worldviews is not necessarily absolutely exclusive. In other words, they can be combined in the process of research.

With my mentality nourished in the realm of social sciences, it is no wonder that I do not blindly and obediently abide by the tenets of positivism where the subjectivity and the uniqueness of individuals as well as their inner experiences with all their complexities are undermined or disregarded by positivism. From this perspective, I find myself drawn to interpretive studies as I advocate the importance of the subjectivity of individuals with their unique ways of constructing a personal reality of the world and the phenomena around them. Having said that, however, I also acknowledge the existence of the reality out there as well. It is the individuals' different ways of interpreting entities of different nature based upon a combination of external appearance and internal cognitive mechanisms nurtured by the individual's experiences and perceptions that form a personal reality of any given entity. Therefore, the reality in my viewpoint can be either single or multiple.

Despite all its strengths, I am also well aware of the limitations of interpretivism in its pure form. A major limitation of interpretivism, discussed in further detail in the ensuing section, is its total abandonment of generalizations, which could otherwise prove very valuable to a study, specifically the current study.

I deem my worldview as that of a pragmatist as it gives me the lens through which I can see the world in multiple ways. Pragmatism as a worldview regards reality as both singular and multiple. It allows for "methodological eclecticism" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 123), that is, the use and mixture of both qualitative and qualitative methodological approaches. Pragmatism centers on the concept of practicality and 'what works' (Creswell and Clark, 2011, pp. 41) and supports mixed methods research for its rejection of the notion of the incompatibility of qualitative and quantitative methods (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2011) . Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003a, 2011) speak of the affinity for pragmatism as the paradigm for mixed methods research and how it has been embraced by scholars as such. I have opted for pragmatism as the worldview upon which I have built the foundations of my study as it allows for mixed methods research to accommodate "paradigm pluralism" (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2011, pp. 287) wherein a variety of paradigms or features of various paradigms may be utilized in tandem to serve the research purposes. Through the lens of pragmatism, the researcher is not bound to any one specific paradigm. He is free to choose eclectically from a variety of approaches to serve his research (Creswell and Clark, 2011, p. 28). For an elaborate description of my choice of paradigm and the rationale behind it please refer to the methodology section in chapter 3. In what follows I will present the theoretical framework underlying my research.

Theoretical framework

David Little's comprehensive theory of language learner autonomy (2009) provides the primary conceptual and theoretical framework for this research. I will also make use of self-regulated learning (SRL), self-efficacy beliefs, attribution theory, self-theories of intelligence and self-determination theory (SDT) in his theoretical framework. The following presents a concise elaboration of Little's theory as the primary drive behind the research along with the underlying rationale.

Drawing on constructivism, sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986), situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and dialogism (Hall et al., 2005) along with practical examples of Leni Dam (Dam, 1995) Hanne Thomsen (Thomsen and Gabrielsen, 1991, Thomsen, 2000, 2003), and Laila Aase, Anne-Brit Fenner and Turid Trebbi (Aase et al., 2000), David Little (2009) presents a comprehensive theory of language learner autonomy which was utilized as a primary theoretical drive behind my research. Besides the theoretical aspect, the theory as Little suggests has its roots in close study of language classrooms with the development of language learner autonomy as a routine achievement (Little, 2009).

Making use of the notions of "active presence, willful agency, demands and protests, negotiations and personal agendas" as features shared by individuals even as babies (Phillida Salmon, 1998, p.24), Little (2007) concurs that even babies are cognitively and emotionally autonomous and have a will of their own. This, along with Edward Deci's argument that human beings' self fulfilment relies on the extent to which an individual feels autonomous, 'volitional in our actions' (Deci, 1996, p. 66) render a constitution of human beings as autonomous individuals (Little, 2009). This biological constitution, Little argues, gives rise to epistemological assumptions that emphasize the individuality and uniqueness of cognitive processes. Accordingly, language learning as a highly cognitive process is uniquely individual. The

construct of individuality and uniqueness of learning as stated above is in accordance with the foundations of constructivism stipulating that knowledge is co-constructed through the interaction of the individual with the world. Such constructs are neither fixed nor necessarily universal, but working hypotheses prone to transformations as they undergo the test of experience by the individual who beholds them (Kelly, 1991/1955, I, p. 51). By the same token, the researcher recognizes the individuality and uniqueness of individuals as highlighted above and values the resulting subjectivity through the subjective perceptions of the participants of the study as part of the collected data upon which the analysis and interpretation were based.

Despite some theoretical differences both Piaget and Vygotsky made significant contributions to constructivism and the indispensable autonomy a child utilizes to construct meaning of the world, whether solely on his/her own, free from external agents as Piaget suggests or through the social interaction and scaffolding leading to the "development of volition" as suggested by Vygotsky (Wong, 2010, p. 52).

Educational contexts informed by constructivist theories, Little (2009) states in his theory of language learner autonomy, set the grounds for turning involuntary, unconscious construction of knowledge into participatory, exploratory and interpretative. Such transition helps learners' active presence and willful agency be recognized and highlighted. It also results in the accommodation of learners' demands, protests and personal agendas. Furthermore, through this transition, learners engage in negotiation. Such a participatory and collaborative environment is of necessity reflective (Little, 2009).

Little (2009) states three principles for the promotion of language learner autonomy, namely learner involvement, learner reflection and the use of target language. In order for the teaching/learning process to be participatory, the learners need to be involved in different

procedures of their learning such as planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is in such a way that the teacher can help learners take charge of their own learning. To promote learner autonomy, the teacher should leave place for reflection and metacognition (Bruner, 1986, p. 129). Citing Bruner (1986), Little highlights the importance of learner reflection or in Bruner's words "reflective intervention" (198, p. 132).

The third principle according to Little (2009), the use of the target language, is an indispensable necessity of the promotion of language learner autonomy. Language is not just the medium used in the shaping of learning process in the classrooms, but also a mediator of internalization of the task and its performance as well as metacognition in the mind of the individual learners. Target language use has been given a key role in the development of communicative proficiency (Gass, 2003, Ellis, 2003, in Little, 2009). Language is an "inescapably dialogic process" (Little, 2009) and input is useless without output. Interaction and output in target language are of paramount importance as they lead the learner to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production (Swain, 2000, in Little, 2009).
Little further discusses the pedagogical implications of his theory of language learner autonomy stating that the target language is regarded as the preferred medium of language teaching and learning and learners are encouraged by the teacher to communicate in the target language. While scaffolding and supporting, the teacher engages learners actively in negotiation which occurs with and between learners. Learners are encouraged to explore and discover effective learning activities by themselves, set learning objectives for themselves and evaluate themselves throughout the process of learning. Learners are encouraged to create a learning journal, a written record, of their learning process and procedures. The teacher plays the role of a supportive counsellor and supports the learners to pursue and discuss their decisions in

collaboration with other learners. The teacher is required to realize the limits of the learners' skills, proficiency and capacity in the extent to which they can assume control over their learning and not cross that level (Little, 2009).

David Little's theory accommodates both theoretical as well as practical aspects of the fostering of language learner autonomy. In terms of theory, according to Little (2009) it draws upon constructivism, sociocultural theory, situated learning and dialogism. The philosophical assumptions including epistemological ones, allow the theory to accommodate the mixed methods research design that I opted for my study. The combination of the biological constitution of human beings with regards to the capacity and drive for learner autonomy and constructivist epistemological assumptions with the importance attached to the uniqueness and individuality of human beings and eventually cognitive processes including language learning are in line with my pragmatist worldview. I appreciate the manner in which the notion of language learner autonomy is presented in Little's theory for its rationale. The emphasis on the uniqueness of individuals stipulated by the theory dovetailed with my endeavor to explore the individuals' perceptions about the fostering of language learner autonomy. Another forte of the theory besides drawing on the theoretical grounds as maintained by Little (2009) is that "it is rooted in close study of language learning environments where a high degree of learner autonomy is a routine achievement" (Little, 2009, pp. 5). In other words, the theory developed by Little (2009) not only has rich and strong theoretical infrastructure, but stems from solid relevant practice. I find the abovementioned feature of the theory as yet another element that further underpinned its applicability to my research as I aimed to explore the perceptions of the TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners to study the current status of the development of

language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. The convergence of the theory and the mixed methods approach proved to be a strong point in the research.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), self-efficacy beliefs, attribution theory, and self-theories of intelligence will be discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Summary

The first section of the study, the introduction, begins by presenting the notion of language learner autonomy, the contributions it has made to the progress of L2 pedagogy, and major issues and misconceptions arising from different interpretations of the concept. The introduction also points to the reasons for the growing interest in language learner autonomy in L2 pedagogy. The introduction chapter then presents a relatively elaborate explanation of the existing gap I tried to address, research purpose, research questions, context and my research rationale. Next, I present my research philosophy and research paradigm including the associated ontological and epistemological assumptions. I then concisely point to my own conceptual choice and leave the elaboration for the methodology section. The introduction concludes with the theoretical framework informing the research. The next chapter, the literature review, also offers a detailed elaboration of the theories that pertain to the present research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Learner Autonomy; Impact on language pedagogy

The introduction of the notion of learner autonomy nearly four decades ago and subsequently language learner autonomy along with the shifts from teacher-centered pedagogy to learner-centered pedagogy, linguistic to communicative competence, behavioristic to cognitive description of acquisition has revolutionized language pedagogy. Many countries across the world have encouraged and in some cases required institutions at different academic levels to adopt measures to develop language learner autonomy (Lamb, 2008). The flourishing autonomous-driven or autonomy-inspiring language schools have in many places altered teaching methodologies to meet new demands in the field. The efforts naturally have not been free from challenges. The relatively young language learner autonomy has had its adversaries as well. Due to the associated complexities, confusions, and misconceptions, there has been some level of resistance in practice. However, the bulk of the existing literature as will be discussed in the following sections serve as evidence to the significant and positive impact of the promotion of language learner autonomy on the language learning experience of the second/foreign language learners. Due to its positive impact, the autonomy-inspiring language pedagogy has now become, in Holec's (2008) words, a "fully-fledged alternative outlook on language learning and teaching" (Holec, 2008, p. 3).

Teachers' and learners' perspectives on autonomy

Personal autonomy. Relying on a broad concept of personal autonomy put forth by liberal philosophers, Benson (2008) argues that most individuals have a tendency toward autonomy and that human beings attach great importance to having freedom in making choices and setting goals. He concludes that this desire is also shared by teachers and learners and makes them interested in the concept of learner autonomy. Benson's view of the inclination to autonomy is similar to Little's (2009) view of the autonomous nature of human beings. Little (2007) suggests that from birth, human beings have a "willful agency, demands and personal agenda" (p. 19). The desire for protecting and practicing one's autonomy grows within human beings and manifests itself through different aspects of life including education. However, with regards to language learner autonomy, there exist certain barriers such as teacher or learner resistance put in place for various reasons which will be explored in the following sections.

Benson (2008) highlights the importance of learning about the perspectives held by teachers and learners on learner autonomy. Moreover, he emphasizes that learners and teachers do not necessarily share the same perspectives. Teachers, Benson argues, focus more on the institutional aspect of learner autonomy with classroom arrangements in place and the students taking charge of the responsibilities determined and established therein. The learners, on the other hand, hold a broader view of learner autonomy. To learners, autonomy is concerned with their lives beyond their classrooms.

Teachers' perspectives. Teachers' perspectives of language learner autonomy to a large extent have been affected and informed by different interpretations of learner autonomy proposed by theoreticians. Such interpretations have been at times controversial and extreme.

Among such controversies, one can refer to a classic dilemma about learner autonomy regarding its nature. Benson (2008) describes as classic yet false an argument regarding the development of learner autonomy as a goal of education being either product oriented or process oriented. The argument as Benson suggests maintains a dichotomy between those who favor the process-oriented nature of the development of learner autonomy encouraging situational freedom where learners can enjoy their autonomy and freedom in their education within the process and the other extreme which supports the idea that the development of learner autonomy should be product-oriented. According to the latter group, the strategies employed to promote language learner autonomy do not necessarily provide situational freedom for the learners during the process, but rather are activities that will ultimately lead to the production of autonomous learners. Benson, however, rejects the existence of such a dichotomy and describes this argument as false stating:

> Both may be required for the achievement of personal autonomy. Certainly, if we view learning as an integral part of life, it is difficult to see how people can lead autonomous lives without being autonomous in respect to their learning in more or less the same ways that they are autonomous in respect to their lives. I also suspect that the separation of the two makes little sense from the learner's perspective. (p. 25).

Benson's comments suggest that there is no genuine contradiction between the two paradigms of process-oriented and product oriented regarding the promotion of learner autonomy. As mentioned earlier, due to its abstract nature, the construct of learner autonomy has been associated with different interpretations and occasional misinterpretations.

Learner Autonomy Myth: Learning in Isolation, Chaos. Some theoreticians have described autonomy as the learners' utter independence from teacher and classroom, where learners practice absolute control over their learning while the teacher and classroom are eliminated. This extreme view of learner autonomy has been the root cause of a number of misconceptions associated with learner autonomy leading to equating learner autonomy with chaos or learning in isolation which according to Dam (2011) could not be any farther from reality. A clear example cited by Benson (2008) is that of Dickinson's:

"This term describes the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions. In full autonomy, there is no involvement of a 'teacher' or an institution. And the learner is also independent of specially prepared materials" (Dickinson, 1987, p. 11).

Or that of Stanchina:

"Autonomy is an experiment in how learning can be freed from the bounds of any institution, and in how the individual can reclaim control of and responsibility for his or her own education while investigating the opportunities to learn from a variety of authentic sources" (Dickinson, 1977, P. 15).

Benson critiques Dickinson's view of autonomy for its blind undermining and elimination of the roles of the teacher and classroom. The current notion of learner autonomy has seen major shifts towards a more mature view of the role that teachers and institutions in a broader sense should play in developing learner autonomy in L2 learners. The two features of capacity for detachment and freedom to make educational choices are two inseparable constituents of an autonomous learner. Accordingly, having the capacity for detachment and yet

the freedom to do so, an autonomous learner might opt for improving his language skills not independent of a teacher or a classroom based on his judgment and requirements.

As cited by Benson (2008) Smith (2003b) describes as a correction the shift from the extreme doing-away-with-teacher and classroom version of learner autonomy toward the capacity version where it can actually be developed in the classroom under the supervision and guidance of the teacher. Benson (2008) furthermore very aptly points to the remarks made by David Little suggesting that:

- "Autonomy is not a synonym for self-instruction.
- It is not limited to learning without a teacher.
- It does not entail an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher.
- It is not a matter of letting the learners get on with things as best they can" (Little, 1990, p. 7).

To further substantiate this, reference can be made to Leni Dam's stance on language learner autonomy with her more than thirty years of action research experience with developing autonomous language learners. Dam (2011) echoes David Little's remarks about language learner autonomy emphasizing that learner autonomy can be developed inside a classroom and that it does not equate with chaos or learning in isolation.

Having discussed some misconceptions about language learner autonomy, it should be noted that lack of thorough information about language learner autonomy can lead to misconceptions on the part of teachers as well as learners. As discussed earlier in the introduction section, a

major problem, which may lead to such misconceptions is the teacher/learner resistance toward the development of language learner autonomy. Teachers with such a wrong impression of the concept see their roles as the teacher on the decline. Therefore, they tend to resist it. The learners, on the other hand, may misinterpret the development of learner autonomy as some form of abandonment of and by the teachers. Not having the confidence or the required competence to proceed on their own, the learners naturally reject the notion of learner autonomy. This is while as stated earlier development of learner autonomy far from weakening the position of teachers or abandoning the learners further makes the role of the teachers more sophisticated and empowers the learners as referenced in the literature by researchers such as Dam (2011).

Learner Autonomy; Different kinds

The different interpretations of learner autonomy especially with regards to degrees and levels have led to the introduction of different versions. Littlewood (1999), introduces two different versions of learner autonomy namely proactive and reactive learner autonomy. Proactive autonomy as Littlewood describes entails "regulating the direction of activity as well as the activity itself", while the second "regulating the activity once the direction has been set" (Littlewood, 1999, p. 75). Smith (2003a) meanwhile, has made a corresponding distinction between weak and strong pedagogies for learner autonomy with regards to the learners' level of autonomy. According to this categorization, the term weak is used when the learner lacks autonomy and the development of autonomy itself is the goal of pedagogy. Accordingly, the strong version refers to the learners who are already considered as relatively autonomous and conditions are arranged so that the learners can practice their autonomy in their learning. According to Benson (2008), reactive autonomy in teachers' perspective is the most practical kind of autonomy where the teachers can set the direction for the learners and then the

learners can make their own decisions with regards to educational choices about the methods to achieve their goals. However, as Benson argues the separation of the two kinds of autonomy and the classic dilemma regarding the situation and capacity as discussed makes little sense as in practice "it is difficult to see how people can lead autonomous lives without being autonomous in respect to their learning in more or less the same ways that they are autonomous in respect to their lives" (Benson, 2008, p. 25).

Learner Autonomy; Different Versions

Apart from the different kinds of learner autonomy arising primarily from different interpretations of its definition as discussed in the previous section, different versions of learner autonomy have also been defined. Benson (1997) mentions three versions; namely, technical, psychological and political regarding learner autonomy. The technical version of autonomy is concerned with the situations where learners are required to take charge of their own learning independent from a language classroom or teacher. The main concern within this version of learner autonomy is helping the language learners develop skill sets and techniques required to manage and perform within such situations. The psychological version of autonomy regards learner autonomy as a capacity for practicing one's autonomy in different tasks including education. Accordingly, the development of learner autonomy is akin to developing a cognitive capacity through cognitive transformation processes for autonomous learning. The political version of autonomy is concerned with encouraging learners in gaining control over the processes and content of learning. The issue is how to prepare structural conditions and context where such a view can be realized (Benson, 1997). Oxford (2003) has added another version of learner autonomy to the three proposed by Benson, namely, a sociocultural version, which portrays autonomy within the framework of social interactions, participation, and social roles. As

Benson, 1997; and Palfreyman, 2003 suggest, however, even though the versions described are present in the literature on learner autonomy, in practice the differences among these perspectives upheld by individuals do not exhibit a black or white distinction but rather a proportional amalgam of the features of each version.

Learners' Perspective

As with the case of the teachers' perceptions, an important issue to note about exploring beliefs is that perceptions are based on unique individual evaluations and judgments meaning that the researcher needs to infer the underlying concepts expressed as beliefs (Henry, 2014). Individuals' perceptions and beliefs as mentioned previously in citations from Bandura (1977, 1986) and Barcelos (2003) shape their world and identity and inform their actions and behavior including the educational ones. Accordingly, the views held by learners about language learner autonomy and how positive it can be for their learning does indeed impact on whether learners will embrace it or on the contrary develop some degree of aversion toward it. Certain theories can be drawn upon with regards to learners' perceptions of language learner autonomy. These theories include self-regulation, self-efficacy, self-determination theory, attribution theory and the theory of implicit theories of intelligence.

Self-regulation. Henry (2014) describes self-regulation as the process through which individuals draw upon their resources including cognitive, behavioral and affective to realize their learning goals. Self-regulation houses both activities that facilitate learning as well as "beliefs about learning such as positive thoughts about the capacity to learn" (Henry, 2014, p. 101). Zimmerman (1998) highlights three major stages associated with self-regulation as a process, namely forethought, performance or volitional control, and self-reflection. According to

Okazaki (2012), forethought involves cognitive processes utilized to facilitate the actual learning. These processes include “goal setting, reflection on previous learning, self-efficacy beliefs, strategic planning, and raising intrinsic interest” (Okazaki, 2012, pp. 22-23). In other words, forethought is a reflection prior to the commencement of the process of learning conducted by the learner. Forethought is followed by the performance where the actual process of learning occurs. The learning process occurring in the second stage i.e. performance is not divorced from cognitive processes. These associated cognitive processes include self-monitoring and self-efficacy beliefs. Finally, there is the entailing self-reflection stage which includes self-evaluation and attribution which will be discussed shortly.

Learner autonomy, Self-Regulated Learning; Similar yet Different. Having discussed Self-regulation and acknowledging the undeniable similarities between learner autonomy and self-regulation especially with regards to learner control and metacognition it should be noted that there exist certain differences that make the two separate areas of inquiry (Murray, 2014). Describing Self-Directed Learning (SDL) based on Dickinson (1987) as ``a manifestation of learner autonomy in which learners accept responsibility for all the decisions related to their learning`` (Murray, 2014, p.322) Murray references Loyens et al. (2008) for a description of the differences between the two constructs as thus:

> “While SRL is usually considered as a learner characteristic, SDL is both a learner characteristic and a design feature of the learning environment. Further, SDL entails more student control over the learning environment and provides a crucial role for the learner in initiating a learning task” (Loyens et al., 2008, p. 423).

In the abovementioned description, SDL is considered as a manifestation of learner autonomy; hence, the differences mentioned between SRL and SDL can be deemed as those between SRL and learner autonomy.

Murray (2014) furthermore points to the different points of origin for the two constructs based on the relevant literature with learner autonomy rooted in a late 1970 individual/learner-centered approach in Europe nourished by "liberal and libertarian theories of learning, such as those propounded by Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire, and Jerome Bruner" (Lewis and Vialleton, 2011, p. 206). Self-regulated learning on the other hand is described "as a branch of educational psychology stemming from research carried out in the 1960s into processes such as self-reinforcement, goal-setting, self-efficacy and self-evaluation, and was informed by social cognitive theory" (Murray, 2014, p.322).

Nonetheless, the core commonalities between the two constructs including the development and application of metacognitive skills, and the prominence of intrinsic motivation make it sensible to make references to the other construct in research on either self-regulation or learner autonomy.

Self-efficacy beliefs. As mentioned above, learners have the ability to condition their beliefs about learning and consequently the behavior pertaining to learning. Bandura (1997) describes as self-efficacy the beliefs and judgments held by an individual about their capability to successfully perform different tasks including learning. The emphasis on the individual agency by both language learner autonomy and self-efficacy beliefs reveals the direct relationship between the two constructs. Furthermore, self-efficacy serves as the infrastructure for motivation (Henry, 2014). To support his opinion, Henry (2014) cites Pajares (2008)

suggesting that individuals will not be motivated to initiate a process unless they believe that they have the ability to succeed in the given task. An important consideration is the impact of prior experience manifested in the individuals' self-evaluation upon self-efficacy beliefs. Individuals' past experiences and the outcomes of their previous actions to a large extent shape the picture learners have of their competence in a given field. Accordingly, it is, in essence, the learners' beliefs about their ability and not the actual ability that determines the degree of self-efficacy beliefs. Highlighting the importance of self-efficacy beliefs, Henry (2014) refers to a very interesting study of Pajares and his colleagues (Mills, Pajares, & Herron 2007) who found self-efficacy beliefs to be a "predictor of achievement" (Henry, 2014, p. 102).

The points made about self-efficacy beliefs clearly portray its relationship with language learner autonomy. While language learner autonomy focuses on the learner taking charge of their learning through active engagement and reflection, the learner will not have the incentive to initiate action either at the cognitive or behavioral level to learn unless they uphold high self-efficacy beliefs. A learner's self-efficacy beliefs determine "how much effort they invest in selected endeavors, how they persevere in the face of difficulties, how resilient they are to adversity, how vulnerable they are to stress and depression, and what types of choices they make at important decisional points that set the course of life paths" (Bandura, 2003, p. 769).

Attribution Theory. As discussed earlier in the self-efficacy discussion, how individuals evaluate the causes of their previous experiences and the eventual outcomes has a significant impact on both their belief system and behavior with regards to future situations. How individuals attribute the outcomes of their actions to external and/or internal factors (Henry, 2014) has been described as attribution theory. Weiner (1992) highlights ability, effort, task difficulty and luck as the primary factors to which individuals attribute their successes and

failures. Okazaki (2012) describes ability and effort as internal factors and task difficulty and luck as external and suggests that the internal or external nature of these causes affects motivation and eventually learner autonomy in different ways. According to Okazaki (2012), learners' motivation is negatively affected upon the recognition of the cause as an external one over which they have little control. Citing Schunk (2008), Henry (2014) also concurs with this position.

Attribution to ability as one of the primary factors is driven by past experiences, failures, and successes. The effort involves how much time and energy an individual has spent on a given task. Task difficulty is determined by the social norm, that is, how others have accomplished the task and finally, luck is applied to the situations whose outcomes were not in control of the individual (Okazaki, 2012).

It is noteworthy to say that attribution and self-efficacy beliefs have a reciprocal and interactional effect. Individuals' self-efficacy beliefs stem from how they attribute their successes and failures to certain causes be they internal or external, i.e. attribution and the self-efficacy beliefs, in turn, impact our belief system and behavior and by consequence the outcome of the action to which we apply attribution theory in a cycle.

Self-Determination Theory. Another theory relevant to language learner autonomy and the current research is that of self-determination theory (SDT). Described as the graded internalization of external motives, SDT is deeply related to learner autonomy and motivation as two interrelated constructs (Okazaki, 2012). To have a thorough understanding of self-determination theory, an understanding of extrinsic and intrinsic categorization of motivation is essential.

Motivation, Extrinsic vs Intrinsic. In his socio-educational model, R.C. Gardner (1979), highlights the importance of motivation and attitude along with aptitude and competence as key elements that help shape learning. In fact, Gardner attaches more importance to motivation suggesting that learning takes place even in the absence of a high degree of aptitude and/or competence provided that motivation exists (Gardner, 1985).

Motivation as a construct has been studied and categorized from different perspectives. Reference can be made to the works of Dörnyei & Csizer (2005), Ushioda (2011) among others. These categories include integrative or instrumental, extrinsic or intrinsic, etc. Extrinsic vs intrinsic is among the oldest perspectives in the literature on motivation. Intrinsic motivation is concerned with the satisfaction an individual derives from an action (Guay, Boggaiano, & Vallerand, 2001). The individual engages in an activity primarily out of a self-desire to satisfy their own inclinations not necessarily to meet external demands. It is driven by a pleasure in the task itself. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is concerned with the individual's drive for engaging in a task separable from the action itself (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Extrinsic motivation is a drive other than the individual's personal interest in the task. The concept of extrinsic motivation as expressed in the definition suggests the sharp contrast it has with learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Okazaki (2012) argues that SDT stipulates that individuals innately value engaging in an action for which they are the source of origin, meaning that they are intrinsically motivated and enjoy the autonomy to regulate their actions. Furthermore, as Ryan & Deci (2002) suggest individuals can "autonomously enact values and beliefs that others requested, provided that people endorse them" (Okazaki, 2011, pp. 85-86).

Ushioda (2011) highlights the interrelatedness of motivation and learner autonomy despite their points of origin in two separate domains, and argues that ‘a key pedagogical principle is enabling students to exercise autonomy or choice in terms of which aspects of their identity they wish to engage and are motivated to express” (Ushioda, 2011, p. 17). Indeed, Ushioda touches upon a very interesting issue, which is the value of autonomous learning and having the choice which reinforces the individual’s motivation through empowering the individual as a learner to have a voice in their learning (Ushioda, 2011).

The internalization of motivation as presented in SDT and the views presented above, is an important consideration in language teaching approaches aiming to develop language learner autonomy. Promoting learner autonomy leads to an increase of motivation and vice versa. Learners feel empowered by realizing that they are in charge of their learning. Consequently, they feel responsible for their growth.

Motivation vs Investment. With regards to the topic of motivation note should be taken that in recent years especially in discussions related to the second language acquisition, the notion of investment (Peirce, 1995) has superseded that of motivation thanks in part to the emphasis it places upon the contribution of the learners’ personal interest in their learning. The concept of motivation is multidimensional and encompasses notions such as ‘attitude’, ‘enthusiasm’, ‘mood’, ‘desire’, etc. The increase in a learner’s investment in an activity means higher motivation on the part of the learner. The contrasts between the two concepts aside, the interrelatedness of learner autonomy and motivation discussed here remains true with regards to the notion of investment.

As was the case with self-efficacy beliefs and attribution, the relationship between learner autonomy, investment and motivation is reciprocal and interactional. As Littlewood (1996) suggests willingness and ability are two essential components of autonomy. Motivation is in turn maintained through the practice of autonomy and empowering the individual to have a say in their learning as discussed above. Motivation is variable and may be affected by a number of factors. As previously mentioned, giving learners the right to have a say in their learning and making them aware of having such a right and even, more importantly, encouraging them to practice their right of autonomy will result in the elevation of their motivation, while the suppression of the learners' voices will result in their demotivation. Finding themselves responsible for the outcome of their learning will boost learners' investment in their learning activities and thereby their motivation.

Self-theories of intelligence. As remarked by Henry (2014) learners' perception of intelligence can significantly impact their willingness to engage in learning activities including language learning. The implication for language learner autonomy is, therefore, quite obvious. With language learner autonomy being all about learners taking charge of their learning and engaging in cognitive processes along with activities to facilitate learning, the way they regard intelligence can significantly impact the learners' active engagement in their learning. Dweck (1999) and Dweck and Leggett (1988) suggest that learners generally perceive intelligence in two different ways. The two different ways may be regarded two opposing extremes in a continuum. These two different groups have been described as "entity theorists" and "incremental theorists" (Henry, 2014, p. 105). Entity theorists deem intelligence as an inborn, relatively fixed endowment that some individuals possess in a given field. To entity theorists, an individual is either born with intelligence for some specific activity or not. This ideology has

certain implications with regards to investment in different activities including learning. A recognition that an individual does not have the required intelligence for learning something, for instance, a language undermines efforts made in that direction. To entity theorists what matters the most as the key to success is being more intelligent than others and "effort is equated with low intelligence" (Henry, 2014, p. 105). Entity theorists, therefore, attribute failure to low intelligence claiming that if an individual has intelligence for learning, hard work in not required (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck 2007; Dweck and Master 2008).

The incremental theorists, on the other hand, assert that unlike entity theorists' claims, intelligence is not fixed, but can be subject to development through focused learning and effort (Dweck, 2008). To the learners who hold such a view of intelligence, being or appearing smarter than others is not the primary goal, but rather learning new things even at the risk of losing face, improving their skills and enriching their knowledge by virtue of which intelligence will also be developed (Henry, 2014).

According to Ryan and Mercer (2011, 2012) in line with the entity and incremental views of intelligence, two corresponding views exist in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). These two are dubbed as fixed language learning mindset and growth language learning mindset respectively. Learners who believe in the fixed mindset value talent and aptitude as the most valued asset of language learners. Success or failure of language learning to this group is mostly attributed to the learner's natural ability or talent. The adherents to the growth language learning mindset on the contrary value learners' efforts and diligence.

My personal view is more in line with the incremental view of intelligence dubbed as growth mindset in language learning literature. I believe however as Dweck and Leggett (1988)

have suggested, the two notions of fixed intelligence and incremental intelligence are two extremes of a continuum and that neither can be completely cast away. I believe that human beings are born with intelligence and talent in different areas. However, this intelligence is not fixed and can be developed under suitable circumstances.

Apart from the validity and veracity of these arguments, belief in either of these ideologies entails certain consequences for the learner with regards to motivation, self-regulation and development of language learner autonomy as discussed earlier. As such, it is incumbent upon the researcher in the area to be aware of these theories and their impact on the learners.

Developing Language Learner Autonomy

As discussed earlier, according to the literature on language learning, the development of language learner autonomy, i.e. encouraging learners to take charge of their own learning (Holec, 1981) and developing the capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action (Little, 1991) can facilitate language learning and result in the development of highly motivated, competent and proficient language learners who have learned how to learn (Dam, 2011). Little (2007) ties success in second and foreign language teaching with three principles of developing language learner autonomy in learners. These three principles as Little suggests are learner engagement, learner reflection, and target language use. During learner involvement, the teacher is required to engage the learners to actively participate in the learning process by encouraging them to share responsibilities in:

- goal-setting
- making choices about the actual learning activities and materials

- managing classroom interaction
- evaluating learning outcomes including self-evaluation

Little (2007) also points out that the ability to manage one's own learning is not something that individuals necessarily possess, but a capacity to be developed, something that has to be taught. This observation has also been suggested by other scholars including Dam (2011) who state that learner autonomy has to be taught to language learners. Learners do not inherently have the skills necessary to manage their own learning. With regards to learner awareness Dam highlights the importance of:

- "Awareness of WHY, WHAT and HOW to learn English
- Awareness of possible activities supporting what, and how to learn
- Awareness of the learners' role as well as the role of others in the learning process
- Readiness to cooperate
- Willingness to make choices and accept responsibilities for them." (Dam, 1995, p. 9).

Little (2007) states that the "process of helping learners take responsibility for their learning" is to happen gradually. The teacher is to determine the pace at which "learner engagement" and "learner's control over learning" can take place.

The second principle, learner reflection, as Little (2007) suggests is in a sense observed in the first principle, since engaging in any decision making with regards to educational goals, materials and activities, evaluation and self-monitoring is impossible without learner reflection.

Learner reflection as the second principle also implies a "reflective intervention" (Little, 2007, pp. 24-24) that involves "explicitly detached reflection on the process and content of learning" (p. 25). Little (2007) describes such a reflection not as a solitary process divorced from the language classroom, but rather a collaborative process during which teachers and learners engage in a dialogue the outcome of which will be internalized uniquely by individuals in accordance with Vygotsky's principle of internalization; "what begins as social speech is gradually transformed into the capacity for inner speech (or discursive thinking) in the target language" (p. 25).

The third principle according to Little (2007) is what distinguishes learner autonomy from language learner autonomy. The use of target language is the medium in which the classroom activities and reflection are conducted. "It is, of course, on this principle that the fullest possible integration of learner autonomy with target language proficiency depends" (Little, 2007, p. 25). Making references to Dam (1995), Thomsen (2000, 2003), Thomsen and Gabrielsen (1991) and Integrate Ireland Language and Training (Little, 2009), Little rejects the critique that it is not possible for learners to have reflection in the target language. In the very early stages when the learners do not have adequate proficiency yet, the teachers can help through scaffolding, but once the learners have achieved the required proficiency they can have reflection within collaboration with the teacher and their peers and "apply metalinguistic concepts to the analysis of the target language and their own output" (Little, 2007, p. 25). The third principle of learner autonomy introduced by Little (2007), in my opinion, is an inseparable constituent of the construct. While target language use helps with improving learners' language proficiency, the process of developing learner autonomy is also facilitated by the target language use with the help of the teacher and in collaboration with learners' peers. It should be noted that Little also

emphasizes a gradual approach with the scaffolding of the teacher in helping learners develop language learner autonomy.

In a similar vein, Scharle and Szabo (2000) highlight raising awareness, changing attitudes and transferring roles as the three stages of developing learner autonomy in language learners. Like Little, Scharle and Szabo point to the gradual process starting with awareness raising in learners, providing them with learning strategies, followed up by reshaping their attitudes about the traditional teacher-centered pedagogy and ultimately transferring roles. The boundaries between the three stages are not black or white. The processes also do not occur in absolutely identical ways among all language learners. For instance, with regards to developing awareness in learners note should be taken that every learner has their path and pace through which the awareness of their learning is crystallized. The important thing, however, is for the stages to be realized so that learner autonomy can be developed in language learners.

Thanasoulas (2000) arguing how learner autonomy can be promoted stresses the use of:

- Self-reports
- Diaries and evaluation sheets
- Persuasive communication as a means of altering learner beliefs and attitudes

Self-reports. Discussing the importance of self-reports, Thanasoulas (2000) suggests that encouraging the learner to produce self-reports while performing a given task helps to make them cognizant of using learning strategies as well as the strategies they use in an introspective process. Such practice will help realize the awareness raising essential in the development of

learner autonomy in learners. “Without awareness, learners will remain trapped in their old patterns of beliefs and behaviors and never be fully autonomous” (Wenden, 1998, p. 90).

Diaries and evaluation sheets. Diaries, journals, and evaluation sheets are vehicles that can help learners perform planning, monitoring, evaluating, identifying and solving problems as they proceed with their autonomous learning. This concept is similar to the use of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in tandem with the Common European Framework of References for languages as advocated by David Little (2002, 2006, 2007, 2009). Introducing the ELP, Little suggests that not only are such journals vehicles for reflection and self-evaluation, but “when language learners keep journals in their target language, using them to capture all their learning, journals move to the very center of the learning” (Little, 2007, p. 26). The ELP contains three parts: language passport, language biography, and dossier for each individual. It also provides checklists of ‘I can’ statements for listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing, scaled according to the common proficiency levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Little, 2006). These statements along with the other sections of the ELP will provide the learner with the possibility of planning, monitoring, and self-assessment.

Persuasive Communication as a Means of Altering Learner Beliefs and Attitudes. According to Thanasoulas (2000) learners’ beliefs about their ability to learn including self-efficacy beliefs impact their performance as discussed earlier. Learners for a variety of reasons may hold some negative as well positive beliefs about their learning abilities. Changing such negative attitudes and beliefs has a positive effect on the development of learner autonomy as the learner gains confidence in their learning ability. “Attitude change is brought

about through exposure to a persuasive communication between the teacher and the learners" (Wenden, 1998, p. 126).

Language Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are "steps taken by the students to enhance their own learning" (Oxford, 1990, p. 1). Oxford's interpretation of learning strategies sheds light on the importance of learning strategies with regards to the development of language learner autonomy. Throughout the history of language pedagogy, hundreds of different learning strategies have been proposed and introduced by various authors, theoreticians, and scholars in the field. Furthermore, the literature is replete with studies calling for the instruction of learning strategies to the learners. Reference can be made to Chamot, 2009; Cohen, 1998; Murphey, Jin, and Li-Chi, 2004; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990, 1994; Oxford, 1990; Nunan, 1996; Wenden, 1998; Williams and Burden, 1997 among many others.

Chamot (2009) stresses the importance of incorporating learning strategy instruction into pedagogy due to its beneficial impact. Chamot describes learning strategies as "thoughts and actions that students use to complete a task successfully" (p. 53). This definition also houses a notion fundamental to learner autonomy where autonomous language learners draw upon learning strategies to take charge of their own learning. An important feature of learning strategies is their sensitivity to context and learners' internal processing preference (Chamot, 2009). Chamot further urges teachers to teach learners about learning strategies to help develop learner autonomy in learners. One of the ways through which explicit teaching of learning strategies can help learners is that it leads to the development of metacognition in learners. It

empowers the learners to have an understanding of their learning processes. Chamot (2009) categorizes types of learning strategies as:

- Metacognitive strategies
- Task-based strategies

According to Chamot (2009), metacognitive strategies are "executive processes used in planning for learning, monitoring one's own comprehension and production, and evaluating whether one has achieved a learning objective" (p. 58). These strategies, therefore, include planning/organizing, monitoring and identifying problems, evaluating, and in general managing one's own learning. Metacognitive strategies share two important features: (a) they are broad and (b) they are generally independent of specific learning tasks. It should be noted that task-based activities can be used within the framework of metacognitive activities. For instance, within the metacognitive learning strategy of planning, a learner may utilize the task-based activities of setting a goal for a specific learning task, previewing a text before reading, etc.

What distinguishes Task-based strategies from metacognitive ones is their specificity with regards to a learning task. Task-based strategies include cognitive strategies such as making images or elaborating to learn or remember something, social strategies like interacting with others to learn, and affective strategies such as using a strategy to control one's anxiety. Examples of task-based activities include using what one knows; background information, inferences, predictions, personalization, paraphrasing, using one's senses; images, sounds and kinesthetic sense, and using one's organizational skills; finding/applying patterns, classifying/sequencing and selective attention, taking notes, using graphic organizers, summarizing, and accessing information sources.

Highlighting the importance of teaching learning strategies to the learners, Nunan (1996) urges the implementation of systematic strategy training, for instance, self-monitoring and self-assessment. Like many other scholars, including Little (2009) and Dam (2011), Nunan highlights the importance of teaching skills that help develop language learner autonomy in learners. "The teacher should not assume that learners have these skills at the beginning of the learning process, nor that all learners will appreciate the potential value of self-monitoring and reflection" (Nunan, 1996, p. 24).

Cohen (1998) also emphasizes the importance of strategy based instruction on learner development suggesting that learners should be empowered as thus:

- "Self-diagnose their strengths and weaknesses in language learning,
- Become aware of what helps them learn the language they are studying most efficiently,
- Develop a broad range of problem-solving skills,
- Experiment with both familiar and unfamiliar learning strategies,
- Make decisions about how to approach a language task,
- Monitor and self-evaluate their performance, and
- Transfer successful strategies to new learning contexts" (Cohen, 1998, p. 66).

Oxford (1990) introduces another detailed version of learning strategies with a macro division of direct and indirect strategies. Figures 1. and 2. show diagrams of the learning strategies as introduced by Oxford. Oxford (1990) argues that learning strategies "help learners to regulate their own cognition and to focus, plan and evaluate their progress as they move

toward communicative progress" (p. 8). Oxford's remark reveals the value and importance of familiarizing learners with learning strategies with regards to the development of language learner autonomy. Learning about these strategies and having them at their disposal will equip learners with the ability to call upon as they practice their autonomy through their learning process. The same notion is emphasized in the works of other key figures in the field including Little (1991, 2006, 2007, 2009).

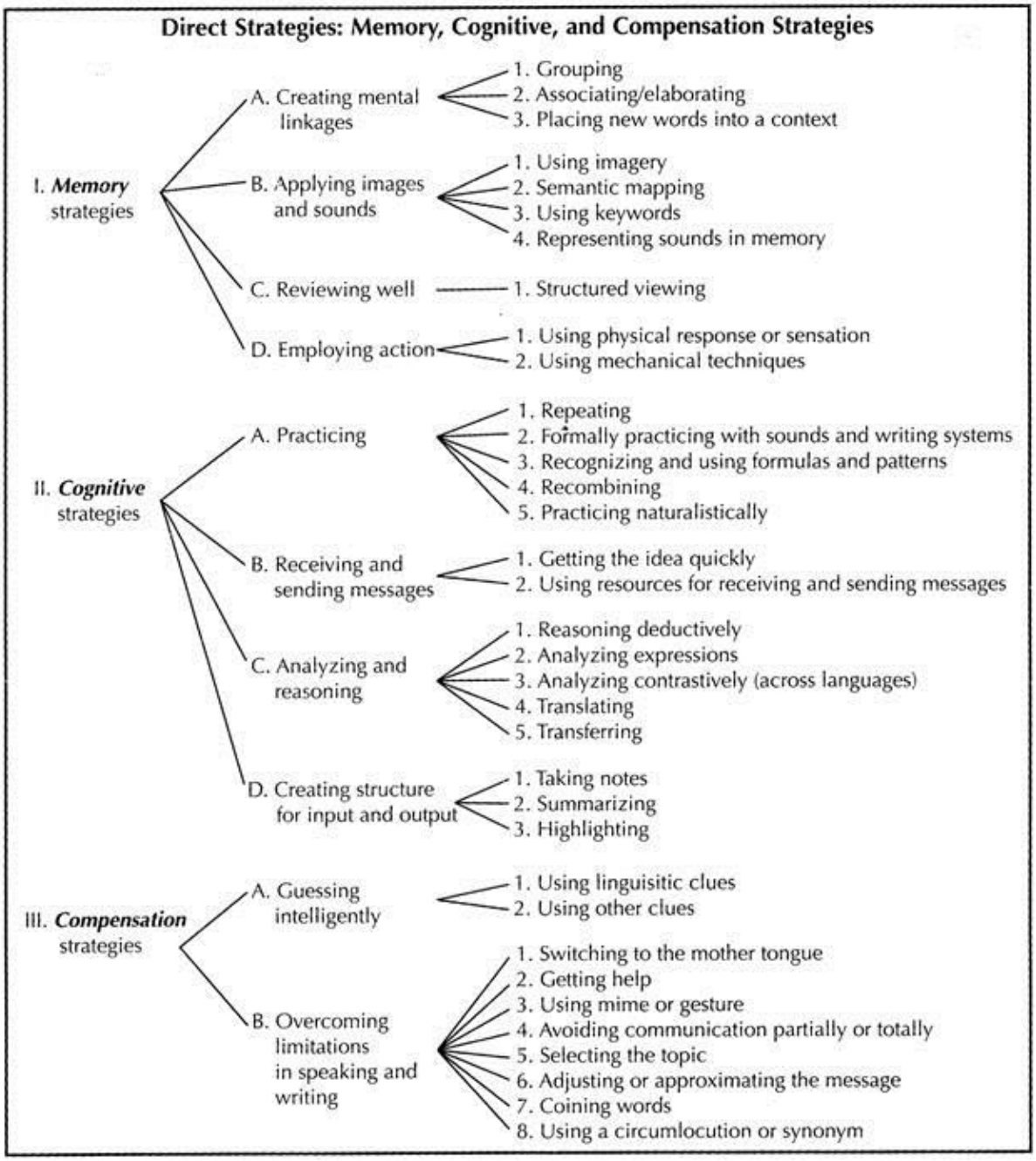

figure 2. 1 Diagram of the Direct Strategy System, excerpted from Oxford, 1991

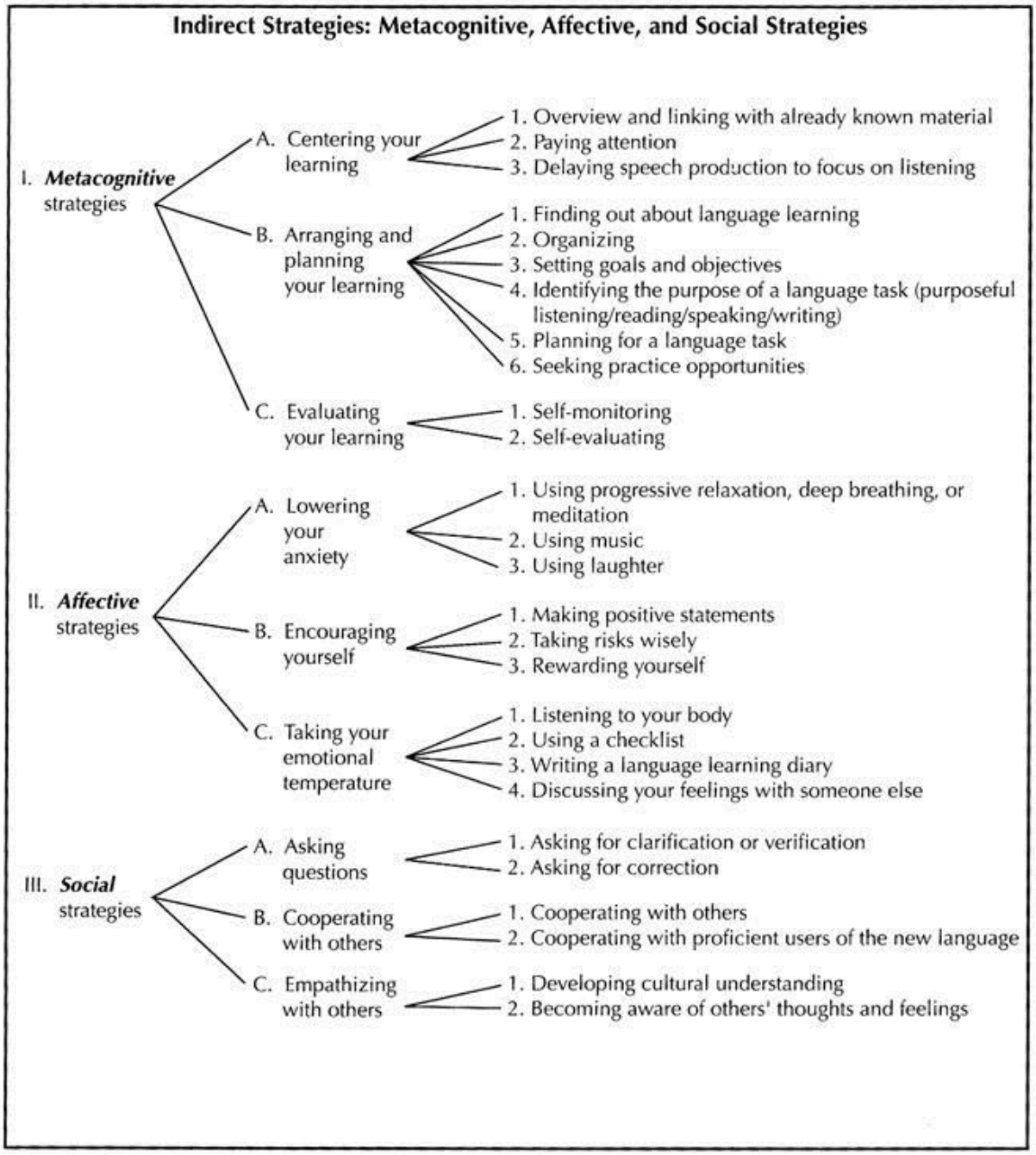

figure 2. 2 Diagram of the Indirect Strategy System, excerpted from Oxford, 1991

Teacher's Role in Promoting Language Learner Autonomy

Contrary to the myths about language learner autonomy with regards to the teacher's role being on the decline, as evidenced by the literature, teachers in an autonomy-inspiring environment in fact assume a more sophisticated role to help learners develop learner autonomy (e.g. Higgs, 1988; Voller, 1997; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997; Hua Weifen, 2001; Gardner & Miller, 2002; Xu Jinfen and Xu Li, 2004; Fumin and Li, 2012; Bajrami, 2015).

Voller (1997) presents a thorough elaboration of three different categories for teachers' roles in a learner-autonomy inspiring pedagogy namely, facilitator, counselor and a resource. Likewise, based on "relevant theories and empirical studies on the relations between learner autonomy and teachers' roles" Fumin, & Li (2012, p. 52) identify four main categories for teachers' roles in a language classroom aiming at developing language learner autonomy. These categories include learning regulator, resource facilitator, classroom organizer, and study guide. Reference can also be made to many other remarks such as Higgs (1988:41) suggesting that "the teacher should act as a manager of the learning program and a resource person". Zimmerman & Risemberg (1997) said that teachers should help develop students' learner autonomy through inspiring students' motivation to take charge of their own learning, highlighting the significance of the strategies that facilitate autonomous learning, encourage learners to conduct self-evaluation and self-monitoring, and emphasizing the importance of learners' utilization of social and material resources. Hua Weifen (2001) suggests that teachers need to aid learners with utilizing their abilities regarding goal-setting, selecting content, determining learning paces, methods, and skills, self-monitoring and self-assessment. Teachers indeed should play the roles of a counselor, facilitator and resource person. Gardner & Miller (2002) also describe teachers' roles as an information provider, counselor, authentic language user, manager, materials writer,

assessor, administrator, and organizer. Also, Xu Jinfen and Xu Li (2004) highlight the importance of teachers' efforts in helping students develop confidence in learning English, helping learners with decision making with regards to learner choices, introducing different learning strategies and skills, and encouraging learner reflection (Fumin, F., & Li, Z., 2012).

A study of the literature on evolving roles that teachers may play in an autonomy-inspiring education reveals the sophistication of the new roles. Therefore, whether an educational system, for instance, the ESL context in Ontario, Canada at large requires or at least encourages teachers to assume such new roles and more importantly, whether the language teachers in practice assume such roles is of utmost importance as it can impact the learners' stance with regards to the development of language learner autonomy.

Critical Documents; CLB, PBLA

To present a thorough understanding of the current status of the development of language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context and the pertinent perceptions of TESL trainers, teacher and learners, I found it useful to include two major documents shaping the ESL context in Ontario, the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB, 2012), and Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) (Pettis, 2014).

CLB. Initiated and funded by the Canadian government, The CLB standard provides a national standard for planning curricula for language instruction in a variety of contexts, a framework of reference for learning, teaching, programming, and assessing adult English as a Second Language (ESL) in Canada, a common yardstick for assessing learning outcomes, a set of descriptive statements about successive levels of achievement on the continuum of ESL performance, descriptions of communicative competencies and performance tasks through which

the learner demonstrates application of language knowledge (competence) and skill (proficiency), a descriptive scale of communicative proficiency in ESL expressed as 12 benchmarks or reference points (Pettis, 2014, p.13).

CLB Principles. The CLB standard also reflects fundamental principles about second language learning, teaching, assessment, and evaluation:

- The CLB standard is learner-centered.
  - Instruction is based on the needs and goals of learners.
  - Learners are informed and involved in decision making.
- The CLB standard is task-based.
  - Performance is best determined through task-based assessment.
  - Instruction is task-based.
  - Tasks are based on real-world issues and events and use authentic text.
- The CLB standard stresses community, study, and work-related tasks.
  - The CLB outcomes are free of context; therefore, they are taught in context through various topics or themes.
- The CLB standard is competency based.
  - Competency statements describe what students can do.
- Communicative competence

  requires organizational knowledge, including grammatical and textual knowledge; pragmatic knowledge, including functional and sociolinguistic knowledge; and strategic competence.

  (Pettis, 2014, p.13)

In light of the principles of language learner autonomy presented in this study, and the principle mentioned above, the CLB standard is aimed at promoting language learner autonomy. TESL Ontario, the accreditation body for the Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESL), encourages the implementation of CLB in the ESL context.

Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA). According to Pettis (2014), PBLA was developed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in response to concerns about the reliability of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) outcomes of language training reported to the federal government. The reports based on numerous pivotal studies suggested that the reliability issue was caused by assessment in LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) programs being "ad hoc and inconsistent" (Pettis, 2014). Accordingly, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) was advised to devise and implement a language portfolio assessment system "nationally to capture language-development progress" (Pettis, 2014, p. 3). PBLA drew upon the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and, in Canada, Manitoba's Collaborative Language Portfolio Assessment (CLPA) which was introduced in 2009. PBLA evolved through field test working in 2009/2010. The guide (Pettis, 2014) was developed and official training was phased in (Pettis, 2014).

Pettis (2014) describes PBLA as:

PBLA is a comprehensive, systematic, authentic, and collaborative approach to language assessment that engages teachers and students in dialogue to tell the story of the student's journey in learning English and meeting personal goals. PBLA is a classroom- and teacher-based assessment approach that is integrated throughout the teaching/learning cycle (Pettis, 2014, p. 7).

PBLA is referenced to the Canadian Language Benchmarks and is the authorized language assessment protocol for language programs funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). PBLA was designed to encourage students "to become more autonomous, active, and self-aware language learners, engaged in and responsible for their learning" (Pettis, 2014). It also aims at facilitating "the development of metacognitive knowledge and skills that students are able to transfer to other aspects of their lives" (Pettis, 2014).

PBLA in Action. In the PBLA system, the teachers collaborate with the students and encourage them to set goals for their learning. This is done through a needs assessment process. The goals should be specific, realistic, attainable, measurable, and time-based. Teachers in collaboration with learners then define themes and modules, and design tasks with real-life relevance geared to the needs of the learners. PBLA requires the students to have a language portfolio, a binder titled, "Language Companion". As mentioned earlier, PBLA draws heavily upon previous Assessment for Learning (AFL) approaches including the CEFR and the ELP. The Language Companion sections parallel with those of the ELP, i.e. language passport, language biography, and dossier. The PBLA binder comprises of 6 sections: About me, Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing, and others. At the beginning, learners collect artifacts (initial CLB placement-test results, language samples, needs assessments, goal statements, etc.). Learners keep these data along with their tasks, tests, and results in their binders. The data will help both the teachers and learners to monitor progress throughout the learning process. The progression in the program should always be aligned with the students' goals. Students are encouraged by the teachers to reflect on their learning, goals, strategies, and challenges. There is an ongoing collaboration between the teachers and students and students and their peers in the class. Self-assessment should be encouraged in the classroom to further reflective thinking in learners. The

learners are encouraged to discuss with the teacher their progress with regards to their goals. The teacher should modify instruction accordingly. At the end of the program, the teacher evaluates students' performance by reviewing their binders. The teacher then provides reports on the learners' performance and will go over the evaluation with the learners. The learners can move to the next level only if they meet the requirements.

Benefits of the PBLA. Pettis (2014) asserts that PBLA has certain benefits to the students, teachers, and program administers:

Benefits to students.

- Encourages self-reflection as an important element in autonomous learning
- Shifts students' focus from the learning outcomes to the learning process
- Helps learners with setting realistic goals, developing learning plans and monitoring progress
- Helps develop skills transferable to other life, work, and school context

Benefits to teachers

- Provides teachers with tangible evidence of student performance
- Provides teachers with concrete samples of work to counsel students on their progress
- Provides teachers with solid justification of their assessment of students to be presented to students or administrators
- Facilitates ongoing reflection on the teaching/learning process so that instruction can be modified accordingly
- Enables teachers to learn about new students' language proficiency level
- Enhances professional development

Benefits to Program Administrators

- Improves communication between teachers and administrators
- Provides concrete assessment and evaluation confirming the credibility of the CLB scores (Pettis, 2014).

PBLA aims at encouraging learners to take charge of their learning by getting them involved in reflection about their learning experience. Such reflection, PBLA assumes, is reinforced through goal-setting, self-assessment, and writing learning reflections. The portfolio embedded in the binder, Language Companion, provides an instrument to document learning in a portfolio that serves as a process, evaluation, and presentation portfolio.

According to Pettis (2014), PBLA relies heavily on the principles of CLB. Pettis describes these principles to be "fundamental" to the PBLA. The principles suggest:

- The CLB standard is learner-centered. Instruction is based on the needs and goals of learners. Learners are informed and involved in decision making.
- The CLB standard is task-based. Performance is best determined through task-based assessment. Instruction is task-based. Tasks are based on real-world issues and events and use authentic text.
- The CLB standard stresses community, study, and work-related tasks. The CLB outcomes are free of context; therefore, they are taught in context through various topics or themes.
- The CLB standard is competency based. Competency statements describe what students can do. Communicative competence requires organizational knowledge, including grammatical and textual knowledge; pragmatic knowledge, including functional and sociolinguistic knowledge; and strategic competence. (Pettis, 2014)

Making reference to literature on effective assessment, Pettis (2014) describes the importance of Assessment For Learning (AFL) and says that teaching and testing should not be regarded as two separate endeavors. She argues that "effective assessment embeds an assessment approach in all instructional practice" (Pettis, 2014, p. 15). She refers to five strategies identified with AFL in the literature and describes them as fundamental to PBLA.

- Clarify learning intents and criteria for success
- Incorporate classroom activities that elicit evidence of learning
- Provide feedback that moves learners forward
- Activate students to become instructional resources for one another
- Activate students to become owners of their learning

Pettis (2014) says, "*Ongoing and effective use of these strategies in teaching and assessment supports learner autonomy and can have a powerful impact on student learning over time"* (Pettis, 2014, p. 15).

Literature Review; Relevant Studies

A number of studies have been conducted on the perceptions of second/foreign language learners, teachers and TESL trainers regarding the promotion of language learner autonomy. The bulk of such studies, however, choose perceptions of one of the abovementioned groups as the focal point of their inquiry. Indeed, the category of TESL trainers with all its importance regarding the shaping of teachers' beliefs about the principles and practices of language pedagogy has been relatively neglected in this regard. Even in the case of teachers' and learners' perceptions and specifically the former category, Borg and Busaidi (2012) point to inadequate research conducted in the area. Since then, however, as will be referenced shortly there have

been some studies conducted in different parts of the world. Yet, a large gap remains to be filled with relevant research in the area. Acknowledging the value of the previous studies on any one group of participants be they TESL trainers, ESL instructors and ESL learners, the researcher believes that to portray a comprehensive and comprehensible picture of the development of language learner autonomy in a given context the inquiry needs to juxtapose all pieces of the puzzle.

Another noteworthy issue is that the majority of the research in the area has not been carried out in a neutral environment, but rather in controlled learner autonomy-inspiring environments. Such research has certain values as it reflects the perceptions of teachers and learners in environments where learner autonomy is being encouraged. This, however, fails to address the current status of the development of language learner autonomy in the everyday realities of language pedagogy in a given context. The present research aimed to address the gap mentioned in Ontario, Canada's ESL context.

In the following section, a number of relevant studies in the area will be presented. Among the most recent studies in the area reference can be made to Lai, Yeung, and Hu (2015); Ng, Liu, and Wang (2015); Szőcs (2015); Yamaguchi, and Hori (2015); Alibakhshi, Keikha, and Nezakatgoo (2015); Civanoğlu and Mede (2014), Shahsavari (2014); Kristmanson, Lafargue, and Culligan (2013). The instrument developed and used by Borg and Busaidi (2012) which will be thoroughly discussed in the methodology section has inspired a considerable number of the studies conducted afterward investigating the teacher's perceptions regarding the promotion of language learner autonomy. However, not all such studies have made use of the instrument in the same way.

Alibakhshi, Keikha, and Nezakatgoo, (2015) make use of the quantitative section of Borg and Busaidi (2012) to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions about the feasibility and desirability of learner autonomy. The study compares the perceptions of two groups of English language high school teachers and private language teachers through a statistical analysis of the elicited data. Apart from the inadequacy of the rationale behind the study being the dearth of such a comparison, the stripping of the instrument developed by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) of the qualitative strand by removing the open-ended questions and the whole interview section to a large extent weakens the study as it ignores the subjectivity of such perceptions. In a similar study, Shahsavari (2014) used Borg and Busaidi's (2012) instrument and methodology to study Iranian EFL teachers' and EFL learners' perceptions on efficiency, feasibility and desirability of learner autonomy in Iran's EFL context. To conduct the study 150 male experienced EFL teachers and 150 male EFL learners were chosen as participants. Upon completion of the procedures, data were statistically analyzed. The question that can be raised with regards to the validity of this otherwise solid research is its failure to recognize the unsuitability of the questionnaire developed by Borg and al-Busaidi which was specifically designed for teachers of English and not language learners. The researcher herself admits that she faced challenges in eliciting data from language learners who were not familiar with the notion of language learner autonomy and all its complications. Shahsavari (2014) fails to present a substantial rationale for the choice of instrument with regards to learner group of her research.

Szőcs (2015) also adapts Borg and Busaidi's (2012) instrument to study Hungarian language teachers' perceptions of language learner autonomy. The participants of the study included 12 female secondary school teachers, with 7 English as a foreign language (EFL) and 5 German as a foreign language (GFL) teachers from an economics school in the south of

Hungary. To conduct the study Szőcs alters the questionnaire with the purpose of tailoring it according to the features of the Hungarian context. The researcher replaces the interview section of the questionnaire with observations of the teachers' classrooms as the qualitative strand of the research. The limited number of the participants allows the researcher to achieve his goal with regards to the observations. The question that remains to be answered, however, is the sample size and whether such a small sample size from one specific venue for the research does, in fact, represent the population which the research aims to address. The point just mentioned, however, has been acknowledged by the researcher himself. As mentioned earlier in the introduction of this section, a combination of the TESL trainers, teachers and learners of L2 would serve as a much more comprehensive picture of the development of language learner autonomy.

Perceptions about language learner autonomy have been studied from different perspectives. Yet, not all studies choose a correct path or rationale behind their inquiry. In a 2015 study, Yamaguchi, and Hori undertake to investigate the relationship between the students' ability to learn foreign languages autonomously and their perceived self-efficacy in the learning of the English language. The researchers choose a quantitative approach to conduct their study by collecting data through a questionnaire. The questionnaire built upon Holec (1979) and modified by Ohki (2011) contained 19 items adapted from "Ohki (2014)" (Yamaguchi & Hori, 2015, p. 128) pertaining to five scales on the ability to learn autonomously and a scale on English-language self-efficacy. The five scales include possession of learning goals, awareness of what I'm learning, comprehension of learning strategies, self-control, and self-evaluation. Not surprisingly the study finds that based on the learners' perceptions of learner autonomy "on the whole, the learners' ability to learn a second foreign language autonomously is relatively low" (Yamaguchi & Hori, 2015, p. 127). I intentionally used the word "surprisingly" because the

perceptions of the learners were collected without having them exposed to learner autonomy-inspiring language pedagogy. Having language learners respond to a questionnaire about language learner autonomy with all the misconceptions associated with the complicated notion behind its intended meaning without developing learner autonomy in them first will lead to such probable findings as a result of the learners' misunderstandings. This is while the bulk of the literature including those referenced in the literature review in this study suggest that the development of learner autonomy in language learners leads to significant positive results with regards to language learning experience. A more productive approach, in this case, would have been to ask students to express their opinions about the practices they were exposed to. Having the students describe their presumptions about issues of which they have either inadequate or no knowledge does not seem like a productive and sound research approach. In the present research, as part of the study involving the category of learners, I explored learners' perceptions about learner autonomy inspiring strategies that are currently being practiced.

Learner Autonomy: English Language Teachers' Beliefs and Practices.

Supported by a British Council English Language Teaching Research Partnership Award, Simon Borg and Saleh Al-Busaidi carried out a very solid research study on the beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy (LA) held by English language teachers in the Language Centre (LC) of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman. In the rationale behind the study titled "Teachers' beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy", Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) cite the "lack of attention to teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy (LA)" (Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012, p. 283) as the motivation for their study. Making references to the literature such as Phipps and Borg (2007) and Wedell (2009), the authors further discuss the importance of the language teachers' beliefs and the impact of such on the actual practice of teaching. The study suggests

that the language teachers' practice of teaching is informed by their beliefs echoed in the choices, initiatives, and decisions (Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012). The study further evolves into the implementation of the research findings in the professional development of language teachers recruited as participants of the study and claims to provide a "model for relating research and professional development that can be applied more generally in supporting teacher development and institutional change in ELT" (Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012, p. 283). The researchers present a thorough account of the context and participants of the study describing the promotion of learner autonomy as one of the aims of the language center where the study takes place. The study aims explore teachers' perceptions with regards to their interpretation of learner autonomy, the contribution of learner autonomy to L2 learning, the degree of autonomy among their learners, the desirability and feasibility of developing learner autonomy, the extent to which they actually promote language learner autonomy and the challenges teachers face in helping their learners become more autonomous.

To investigate the research questions the researchers make use of a well-designed, piloted researcher developed questionnaire and interviews. Highlighting the importance of employing a sound research instrument, the researchers cite several references as the material upon and from which the questionnaire was molded. The questionnaire consists of four different sections. Section 1 contained 37 Likert scale items addressing key themes relevant to learner autonomy and which teachers responded to on a five-point scale of agreement; Section 2 asked teachers for their views on the desirability and feasibility of (a) involving learners in a range of course decisions, for example about course objectives and (b) developing in learners certain abilities associated with learner autonomy, for instance monitoring their own progress. Section 3 asked teachers two questions about their work at the language center: how autonomous they felt their

learners were and whether they felt they promoted learner autonomy in their own teaching; for both questions, teachers were also asked to provide examples or explanations to support their answer. The final section collected background information about teachers and their work.

The data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed by SPSS for the descriptive statistics. The responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed based on the content to identify and categorize the common themes. The interviews which contained the research questions were recorded, transcribed and analyzed qualitatively to make possible an in-depth exploration of the issues raised in the questionnaire. The recurrent themes were identified and categorized. For instance, 95 per cent of the language teachers shared the same core notion of the concept of language learner autonomy. 93.4 per cent of the teachers believed that the promotion of language learner autonomy has a positive impact on the successful learning of a second/foreign language. a large number of the teachers i.e. about 40 per cent believed that their learners were not autonomous, emphasizing the need for the promotion of language learner autonomy. The study also presents an analysis of the collected data regarding teachers' feelings about the desirability, feasibility, and challenges of the promotion of language learner autonomy as well as their assessment of their own teaching vis-a-vis such end.

The findings of the study were then fed to the professional development component of the study where the participants of the study, that is, language teachers were exposed to a 4-session workshop about the development of language learner autonomy.

The findings of the study though interesting as acknowledged by the research reveal that the majority of the language teachers supported the notion of the development of language learner autonomy in theory. In practice, however, the teachers seemed to have mixed feelings about its feasibility. More importantly, based on the data collected the study suggests that around 80 per

cent of the teachers felt that they helped promote language learner autonomy among their students while another 10 per cent were unsure and yet another 10 per cent said they did not do so. The question of substantiating such claims, however, is not even raised in the study. How can such claims be substantiated? In case such an assessment was among the goals of the study, a survey of the language learners' opinions would seem absolutely essential as a yardstick to such unchallenged claims. Admittedly, the research, however, does not make any such assertion as to verify or substantiate the claims made by the teachers. Nonetheless, one could argue the value of such claims without any substantiation. Furthermore, as the study suggests, the perceptions and beliefs of the language teachers inform their teaching practice. The beliefs of the teachers are to a large extent shaped through the teacher training programs they are exposed to. Therefore, to have a thorough understanding of the rationale behind the teachers' conceptualization of (the promotion of) language learner autonomy, the perceptions of TESL trainers appears to be indispensable. Accordingly, a combination of the perceptions of second/foreign language TESL trainers, teachers and learners seems to be the most appropriate means of presenting a model of the status of the promotion of language learner autonomy in a given context. The abovementioned does not come into criticism of Borg & Al-Busaidi's study as the researchers do not cite such as their research goal. The salient point of the research for me, however, was the very well-designed questionnaire and interviews conducted to elicit data. I found the instrument in this research to be very solid in terms of content and design. The questions raised in the study present the researchers with a rich understanding of teachers' perceptions about the promotion of learner autonomy. I found these questions helpful in eliciting responses to shed light on my research questions. Upon deliberating on their study, I concluded that combined with the perceptions of the two other groups of TESL trainers and ESL learners

within a mixed methods research design I could present a comprehensive understanding of the promotion of learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context.

With regards to the prospective institutional change, the research cites several principles which primarily focus on the importance of teachers' roles and beliefs in achieving the changes deemed positive. As stated by the authors, the research presents a fine model of linking research findings to professional development. Another feature of the research conducted by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) is the venue in which it was conducted. The language center where the research took place was not neutral with regards to the development of language learner autonomy. As informed by the researchers, the language center aimed at developing language learner autonomy in learners and naturally the language classroom practices were designed to realize that goal. While this offers certain benefits, the study cannot be said to serve as a comprehensive representation of a context. This is what I tried to achieve in my study, i.e. to study participants' perceptions about the promotion of learner autonomy in the adult ESL context in Ontario.

Teachers' Roles in Promoting Students' Learner Autonomy in China.

Sponsored by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities of the Educational Technology Division of the Ministry of Education in China, Fumin & Li (2012) conducted quantitative research to investigate the roles of the teachers in China's second/foreign language learning at the collegiate level vis-a-vis the promotion of language learner autonomy. In the introduction of their paper, while describing it as a central concern and the buzzword in second/foreign language learning, the authors point to the novelty of the promotion of language learner autonomy in China, given the fact that since 2007, the Chinese Ministry of Education has required the educational institutions to tailor their instruction towards the promotion of language learner autonomy with the aim of facilitating language learning free from the constraints of time

and place. The paper suggests that due to its novelty, there have been a lot of misconceptions about the feasibility and desirability of the promotion of language learner autonomy despite the acknowledgment of its "tremendous contribution to student learning", (Fumin & Li, 2012, p. 51). The research bases itself on the foundation of the existing literature on the teacher's roles in the context of the promotion of language learner autonomy, discussing the roles of the teachers as the information provider, counselor, authentic language user, manager, materials writer, assessor, administrator and organizer among others. The research aims to empirically investigate the actual roles college English teachers play in China and which roles appear to be more emphasized.

To respond to the research questions, making use of the literature on the strategies used for the promotion of language learner autonomy, the researchers developed a questionnaire focusing on the four variables of teacher roles derived from the relevant theories and empirical studies, namely learning regulator, resource facilitator, classroom organizer, and study guide. The participants of the study were non-English major college English language learners. The questionnaire contained 24 items with the responses designed on a five-point Likert scale and the loadings on each item was calculated and analyzed using statistical means. Each question addressed one specific role the teachers could play regarding the promotion of language learner autonomy. The students responded to the questions about the roles of the teachers in the development of language learner autonomy. For instance, one question asked if the teacher encouraged students to give peer assessment or another asked if the teacher encouraged students to reflect on the learning process. The findings of the study revealed that, contrary to some misconceptions, not only were the roles of English language teachers at the collegiate level in China not on the decline but rather the teachers had in practice assumed more complex

ones. The study offers a solid model of an empirical research aiming to investigate the perceptions of the language learners about the promotion of language learner autonomy in China. However, to have a thorough exploration of such a model, the investigation seems to be missing an important component, that is, the perceptions of the language teachers as well as the perceptions of the language TESL trainers who play an essential role in shaping the teachers' beliefs which ultimately influence their teaching. In other words, the use of the language learners' views on the roles of language teachers as the sole evidence or source of data seems inadequate for presenting the actual model of the promotion of language learner autonomy in a given context. A key strength of the study, however, is the solid questionnaire devised to investigate the roles of the teachers regarding the promotion of language learner autonomy. Adding a qualitative strand would also enrich the study to a large extent. In my research, I used both quantitative and qualitative strands to explore the perceptions of TESL trainers, teachers and learners to respond to my research questions. Indeed, as it will be elaborated in chapter six, owing to the unique quality of individual's perceptions, the qualitative strand of the study presents the researcher with accurate in-depth insight of the research questions. While offering certain benefits questionnaires are vulnerable to response biases and may fail to present an accurate understanding of individuals' genuine feelings.

Students' and teachers' perceptions of autonomous learning: A case study of a vocational institution in Hong Kong. For her doctoral dissertation, Wong Wai Mei conducted qualitative research on the perceptions of teachers and students in a vocational school in Hong Kong about learner autonomy (2010). Wong aimed to find out how the participants of the study including twenty students and four teachers construed learner autonomy and what value they attached to it. The research further aimed to explore the relationship between learner

autonomy and the teachers' and students' teaching and learning experiences respectively. To collect data from the participants, the researcher made use of semi structured interviews as the instrument of her study. A distinctive characteristic of the research is that of the context. The vocational institute where the research takes place, along with the execution of the curriculum aimed at promoting autonomous learning to facilitate lifelong learning. Hence, the venue is not a neutral educational environment vis-a-vis the promotion of learner autonomy. This, of course, should not be regarded as a negative feature of the research due to the nature of the research questions and what the researcher aims to achieve. In terms of sampling, the researcher made sure the participants were all in the same discipline, business administration, in this case, to minimize the impact of the subject area. The researcher adopted snowball sampling wherein the initially chosen participants recommended other participants who would be willing to participate in the study to ensure the facilitation of data elicitation. The interviews were repeated once for all and twice for some participants on a needs basis to establish a strong rapport with the participants to ensure the interviews would result in an in-depth analysis of the perceptions of the participants. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative means. The findings of the study suggest that the learners in this study had an instrumental view of learner autonomy and valued autonomous learning based on the outcomes that vary for each individual. The four teachers likewise believed that autonomous learning results in different outcomes, which vary among the individuals. Apart from the findings of the study, it should be noted that due to its qualitative nature, the research does not offer generalizability. Indeed, as acknowledged by the researcher herself, "the selection of participants was confined to both the students and teachers involved in Business studies in the case institute" (Wong, 2010, p.110). It remains, in fact, a matter of speculation over how valuable the findings of the study can prove to be to those beyond the

context of the research. As mentioned above, the research did not take place in a natural, unbiased environment with regards to the promotion of learner autonomy, but rather in a vocational institute where autonomous learning was promoted as suggested by the researcher. Furthermore, to duly accommodate the research questions, the use of questionnaires along with the interviews would have added to the validity of the research findings as well. An interesting point made in the study with reference to the pertinent literature was the issue of the impact of culture and context upon the perceptions of learner autonomy. Wong points to the differences between the Western culture and those in the East affected by the Confucian school of thought or Confucian-heritage cultures specifically the Chinese culture where the teachers and learners show a significant resistance toward the promotion of learner autonomy. Pointing to the teacher-centeredness education tenets and tendencies in the Chinese culture Wong (2010) highlights the importance of considering context as a major element in relevant research (Wong, 2010, p.43).

Contrasted to Wong's research, my research, although having certain commonalities, pursued completely different research questions and research methodology. Wong's research explores teachers' and students' perceptions about autonomous learning in a vocational institute with the participants enrolled in business administration subject area, whereas my research studies language learner autonomy which according to Little (2007) is distinguished from other kinds of autonomous learning. Also, as stated above, Wong's study due to its qualitative nature and very limited number of participants does not offer any generalizability as acknowledged by the research herself. Using a mixed methods research design, I intend to explore and present the current status of the promotion of language learner autonomy in the adult Ontario's ESL context in Canada.

Experiences with Autonomy: Learners' voices on Language Learning. The study by Kristmanson, Lafargue, & Culligan, (2013) begins by referring to the relatively recent and flourishing interest in Canada's academia to the promotion of language learner autonomy through the use of a language portfolio inspired by the European Language Portfolio (ELP; Council of Europe) and the initiatives related to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001), both designed to facilitate the promotion of language learner autonomy. Making reference to a number of studies in the area, utilizing an interpretive qualitative research design, the researchers aim to study the experiences of grade 12 students using a language portfolio with the aim of promoting learner autonomy in their second language classrooms in a large urban high school. Along with referencing a number of recent studies in the area, the research points to the first workshop on the topic in 2005 (Rehorick & Lafargue, 2005, p. 2) suggesting the relative novelty of the promotion of language learner autonomy in the Canadian context. The references made by Kristmanson et al. (2013) serve as evidence to the growing interest in Canada's academia toward the research on the promotion of language learner autonomy. To conduct the research the study focuses on the following research question:

> What are the experiences of the learners involved in courses where a language portfolio is used? And the sub question more specifically directed toward the learners' experiences about learner autonomy:
>
> What are learners' experiences with autonomy in their courses where a language portfolio is used?

The paper focuses on the feedback of the learners in their second language courses where an action research study on the use of principles of ELP and CEFR especially the promotion of

learner autonomy is conducted. The most prominent feature about the ELP is its "pedagogic function to guide and support the learner in the process of language learning and a reporting function to record proficiency in languages" (Council of Europe, 2004, p. 4). The ELP has three major parts, namely a language passport, language biography, and a dossier. The principles of CEFR including, primarily the self-assessment grid, Can Do statements, and goal setting were also used in the study. The participants of the study, i.e. twelve learners were introduced to CEFR and used a language portfolio in their language courses which were French immersion and core French. Purposeful sampling of the participants was used to ensure the maximum exposure to the actions aimed at implementing the ELP and CEFR.

Data were collected through fifty-minute, semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions with the focus group. The questions focused on the learners' experiences with the language portfolio, and if they had a say in their learning experiences. Teachers were also informed of the learners' perceptions anonymously which helped them with self-reflection and reflection about their practices. The findings of the study suggest that learners had positive experiences with the use of the Language Portfolio and the CEFR; hence, the promotion of learner autonomy. The study further highlights some challenges about the promotion of language learner autonomy and how affective factors should be considered. Referencing Reinders (2010) the researchers emphasize the need for "supportive and success oriented environments" in relatively more learner-centered language pedagogy (Kristmanson, Lafargue, & Culligan, 2013, p. 479). The study suggested that the learners welcomed the freedom in making decisions about their own learning and other tenets of learner autonomy, insofar as they deemed it not as an imposition, but of their own will. On the negative side, in some cases, the learners felt that they

were not well-equipped for goal-setting, decision making and/or self-assessment. This is why according to Little (2009b) reflective learning and learner autonomy hinge on self-assessment.

The study holds certain merits especially with regards to its findings suggesting the usefulness of the promotion of language learner autonomy. The qualitative nature of the inquiry assures an in-depth insight into the feelings and experiences of the participants of the study about the promotion of language learner autonomy through the use of a language portfolio and the core principle of the CEFR. Furthermore, the set of references made by the authors reveals the relative novelty of the practice in Canada. The study indeed adds to the body of works that reveal the positive impacts of the promotion of language learner autonomy highlighting the question inquiring if and/or how Ontario's ESL has accommodated the need for the development of language learner autonomy among learners. Indeed, the majority of the studies in the area suggest that the sensible promotion of language learner autonomy as a capacity and a quality of learners to take charge of their language learning facilitates lifelong learning and improves the efficacy of language classrooms. Given the unique qualities and circumstances of every context and the culture-bound nature of the views toward learner autonomy, a study reflecting the current status of the promotion of language learner in Canadian ESL context will bear great value to those involved in the field.

Developing Learner Autonomy with School Children: Principles, practices, results. Among the iconic figures working on learner autonomy such as David Little and Phil Benson, Leni Dam has been one of the most prolific and dedicated ones conducting valuable research in the field. What makes her stand out is her long experience in realizing the development of learner autonomy in practice. She has long years of firsthand experience in utilizing strategies and techniques that help promote language learner autonomy among learners.

Published in “Fostering Autonomy in Language Learning”, Ed. David Garner (2011), in a solid paper, Leni Dam discusses a longitudinal study on the development of language learner autonomy in secondary school language learners at an institutional level. In the paper, she discusses the reasons as well as the principles for the implementation of the development of language learner autonomy. She further elaborates on the possible pitfalls that need to be considered. One of the key strengths of Dam’s work is its explicit way of disproving the myths wrongfully associated with learner autonomy. She addresses misconceptions such as equating learner autonomy with chaos, learning in isolation, and the diminution of the role of the teacher. Dam reiterates that the development of learner autonomy in an institutional context such as a school or a language classroom has certain inseparable ingredients that help realize such a goal. The concept of developing means that the practice is not about the nature of learners regarding learner autonomy be they autonomous or not from the very beginning of classes, but rather about the practice of developing learner autonomy among the learners. Furthermore, the concept of institutional context advocates a collaboration and not an isolation within the curricular guidelines with regards to the promotion of language learner autonomy. In other words, developing learner autonomy is not synonymous with abandoning learners to do everything by themselves. Such a blind abandonment is definitely not equal to David Little’s definition of learner autonomy as a capacity for detachment on the part of the learners among other features. Helping language learners find their voice and empowering them with the ability to map the process of their learning, determine objectives, and make learning choices for themselves is far from deserting them. Accordingly, in helping realize such a sublime calling the teachers’ roles and functions not only do not decline but rather evolve into much more sophisticated ones.

After discussing the reasons for the implementation of the development of learner autonomy, Dam (2011) elaborates on the techniques and strategies used in practice along with the teachers' and learners' roles. Citing a number of motivation research references including (cf. Ushioda, 1996, 2006; cf. Little, 2006) Dam (2011) highlights the importance of choice saying that giving the students a choice without a doubt motivates the learners. Furthermore, it raises the awareness of learning among the learners and invokes learner reflection. As the learners realize that they have a say in their learning process and that they can make decisions they feel responsible for their decisions as the outcome at least partially hinges on the choices they make. Having a say in one's learning further reinforces self-esteem (Dam, 2011).

Highlighting many issues associated with the development of language learner autonomy, Dam (2011) emphasizes the importance of the use of clear guidelines for the learners informing them of what is expected from them by the institution, focus on learning rather than teaching, the use of authentic language in the classrooms to create real life environment, evaluation as well as self-evaluation, and use of logs, portfolios and posters and activities that can help with the promotion of language learner autonomy.

When it comes to the results of her longitudinal study Dam unequivocally describes the development of learner autonomy as a success. She maintains that the result of her more than three-decade work with the development of learner autonomy has not only been "learners with a high communicative proficiency (at different levels) but learners who have:

• Developed enhanced self-esteem

• Acquired an evaluative competence of self and others

• Learned how to learn and to accept responsibility

• Gained social competence by experiencing social forms of learning

• Prepared for lifelong learning" (Dam, 2011)

Leni Dam's longitudinal study serves as yet more invaluable evidence to the positive impact of the development of language learner autonomy. It further disproves a number of misconceptions about learner autonomy as mentioned above. What makes Dam's work so valuable is her firsthand experience, the action research nature of her research which helps confirm the validity of her findings. The positive impact of the development of language learner autonomy urges further research in the area to investigate whether the L2 pedagogy in a given context has systematically adopted measures to promote it and if so, explore and present a model of the strategies employed in so doing.

Summary

Chapter 2 delves into learner autonomy related literature with research purpose as the focal point. The review begins with language learner autonomy and its impact on language pedagogy. It then moves on to a discussion of teachers' and learners' perspectives on learner autonomy. Elaborating on teachers' and learners' perspectives provided a thorough account of misconceptions and myths associated with language learner autonomy. Next, to expound on the teachers' perceptions, different kinds and versions of learner autonomy to which such perceptions may be subscribed are introduced. The discussion continues with learners' perspective and evolves into topics such as self-regulation, differences and similarities between learner autonomy and self-regulated learning, self-efficacy beliefs, attribution theory, self-determination theory, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and self-theories of intelligence. The review then moves on to present literature on developing language learner autonomy discussing not only why the development of learner autonomy is recommended but how it can be realized.

The significance of teaching language learning strategies is also discussed as a facilitator of developing language learner autonomy. The literature review then presents the literature on the studies conducted on the perceptions of learner autonomy with some of the most recent ones. It concludes with a more detailed presentation of several studies which I deemed significant. In the next section, a detailed description of the research methodology will be presented.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Given the importance of the development of language learner autonomy in L2 pedagogy, the present research aims to study the current status of the promotion of language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. The study offers several distinct features. Firstly, it combines the perceptions of three major groups involved in the ESL context, namely TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners to present a comprehensive picture. Secondly, due to the culture- and context-bound nature of the perceptions associated with learner autonomy as an abstract construct, the Ontario context with its diversity provides a unique venue for the study. Thirdly, the study, as opposed to the majority of previous ones, is not confined to a controlled environment where learner autonomy is promoted. Rather, it explores the adult ESL context in Ontario as is. Finally, the presence of two distinct contexts of PBLA and non-PBLA in Ontario's ESL context with the former aiming at promoting learner autonomy provided a unique opportunity for the study to investigate the introduction and implementation of the PBLA in the context.

Combination of perceptions. To realize the research objectives, the perceptions of three groups of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners were investigated to form a comprehensive understanding of the research inquiry. The researcher deemed the combination as a strength of the research. The bulk of prior studies in the area lack such a comprehensive view toward the issue and instead focus merely on one specific group, for instance, learners or teachers only. This is while each and every group in the abovementioned categories directly impacts the perceptions of other groups with regards to language pedagogy and the processes

involved. TESL trainers help shape the beliefs of ESL instructors who leave an indelible impression on ESL learners whose demands and requirements in language learning, in turn, generates an impact on the TESL trainers, and theoreticians to tailor teaching approaches and methodologies that suit such needs. As can be seen, the mechanism operates in the shape of a cycle. Therefore, I assumed leaving each of the elements out of the cycle would not result in the production of a comprehensive view. This by no means should be interpreted as an effort to undermine the value of research conducted on each specific group of participants stated above.

The cultural diversity of Ontario's ESL context. As referenced on several occasions, perceptions about the development of language learner autonomy are highly contextual and culture-bound. In other words, every context in all probability yields results specific to that given context. Having said that, the present study will be the first of its kind in the Canadian adult ESL context in Ontario.

Adult ESL context. Another distinct feature of the present research, unlike the majority of previous research in the area, is that it is not limited to exploring the perceptions of the participants of the study in a controlled environment with policies and practices aimed explicitly at developing language learner autonomy in learners as a goal. It studies the adult ESL context.

PBLA/non-PBLA dichotomy. The unique dichotomy of PBLA/non-PBLA contexts served as a unique opportunity to study PBLA as a paradigm aiming at promoting learner autonomy among its primary goals.

All research is shaped and expanded upon the research question(s) and holds certain value accordingly. It is indeed the research goal that determines what level or degree of collectivity or comprehensibility is required. For the sake of the present research, the researcher

deemed it necessary to explore the beliefs and perceptions of the three groups of individuals to explore how Ontario's ESL context has responded to the development of language learner autonomy.

Aside from the welcome on the part of the Canadian academia toward language learner autonomy, self-regulation, and self-directed learning as evidenced in the introduction section, certain broad questions remain a grey area:

- How has the ESL context in Ontario in practice responded to the development of language learner autonomy in learners?
- How do TESL trainers, ESL instructors and ESL learners feel about the development of language learner autonomy?
- How familiar are ESL instructors with the notion of language learner autonomy and what views do they hold about it?
- Are TESL trainers encouraging language teachers to help develop language learner autonomy in learners?
- Are teachers using strategies that help develop language learner autonomy in learners? If so, what is the model of such practice?

The questions raised will be discussed in a more polished tone in the research questions section that will follow shortly.

Research Paradigm

Research has been described as a means of discovering truth. The inquiry of truth is intertwined with the inquirer's worldview, that is, how the researcher views reality and the knowledge of or about that reality. What is reality to the researcher? Is it independently out there? Is it a construct or a set of constructs shaped in the mind of the inquirer? How does the researcher understand the reality and where does that understanding or knowledge come from? How does the researcher go about the research? What kinds of questions does s/he put forth and how does s/he intend to elicit responses to those questions. How does the researcher then analyze and interpret the findings of his or her study. The inquiry of truth in other words, is shaped by the researcher's philosophical assumptions including ontological and epistemological assumptions that eventually determine the methodological approach, instrumentation, data collection, analysis and interpretation. Regarding the importance of research philosophy Creswell (2013) cites Huff (2009) suggesting that 'it shapes how we formulate our problem and research questions and how we seek information to answer the question' (Creswell, 2013, p. 19).

The choices that the researcher opts for vis-a-vis the abovementioned questions shape the research paradigm that informs the research. Creswell (2013) describes paradigm as a set of generalizations, beliefs and values that provide a foundation for conducting research. Cohen (2007) highlights the importance of choosing the appropriate research paradigm suggesting that different research purposes demand different research paradigms and that "fitness for purpose must be the guiding principle" (Cohen, 2007, pp. 3). Choosing the appropriate research paradigm thus demands well-justified choices regarding the researcher's philosophical assumptions that inform his/her research, namely ontological, epistemological, methodological assumptions with befitting methods for data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Research Design

Describing research designs as "procedures for collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting data in research studies" Creswell & Clark (2011, p. 53) state that research designs help guide the researchers make sound choices with regards to methods decisions, data collection and interpretation throughout their studies. Research design is informed by the researcher's philosophical assumptions that ultimately shape the research. After meticulous deliberation on different research paradigms, I concluded that owing to their shortcomings for the present study, neither positivist nor interpretivist paradigms would fit the purpose of my research.

Inadequacies of positivism. The research is based on the perceptions of TESL trainers, teachers and learners about the development of language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. These perceptions stem from the minds of individuals who conceive different interpretations of the construct of language learner autonomy. The perceptions therefore are subjective and prone to variations rooted in the uniqueness of the individuals who hold them. This subjectivity is far from the objective lens positivist paradigm mandates the researcher to wear. Through the study, the researcher aims to learn how the participants of the study value the development of language learner autonomy and the practices involved.

The rationale behind the choice of perceptions by the researcher is the problems associated with quantifying language learner autonomy as stated by Reinders (2011). Raising the issue of immeasurability of learner autonomy Reinders (2011) describes it as one of the sources of confusion in the relevant research and a reason for the dearth of empirical research in the area. Reinders (2011) suggests that "learner autonomy is a bit like art; we can't agree on its definition, but we all seem to know what it is" (Reinders, 2011, p. 1). One of the major problems of positivist approaches as discussed above is the simplification and mathematization of phenomena

to present an explanation that involves generation and discovery of universal laws about a given problem. Positivist approaches therefore fail to present an in-depth insight into the complex issues of social sciences and human beings due to their heavy emphasis on the generation of universal laws that explain regularities and causal links between circumstances and occurrences while disregarding the individuality and uniqueness of individuals. Due to its complexities as evidenced by different interpretations held by different individuals, language learner autonomy, similar to many other issues of social sciences, remains to some extent blurry to the researcher armed only with the positivist lens. I, therefore, assumed that in order to delve thoroughly in the area, I had to utilize interpretivist approaches as well to tap into the subjective interpretations indiscernible to the objective scope of the purely positivist researcher.

Interpretivism. While the inquiry of subjective perceptions of individuals about the development of language learner autonomy seems to be in line with the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying interpretivism for its focus on the subjectivity of individuals, the paradigm does not appear to be quite adequate in terms of fitting the research purposes. I aimed at exploring the participants' perceptions about the current status of the development of language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. To fulfill this purpose, I intended to understand what roles were assumed by ESL instructors in Ontario's ESL context, and whether they were systemic. Also, what specific practices and strategies are valued above others in their opinion. This is the point where the researcher finds the interpretivist approach inadequate in meeting the research purpose. A major problem of the interpretivist paradigm, critics argue, is its failure to allow room for making generalizations which might otherwise prove to be very useful (Cohen, 2007). For this research, however, I chose to employ the quantitative strand only for the case of ESL learners on the grounds of

feasibility. The quantitative data in the case of ESL learners, in conjunction with the qualitative data from all the three groups of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners, were collected and analyzed to present the current status of the development of language learner autonomy along with an in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions. The quantitative approach would not have been feasible in the case of TESL trainers and teachers owing to the unavailability of sufficient participants required to provide a quantitative approach with the statistical power necessary as demanded by a sound empirical study. In light of the above reasoning, I came to the conclusion that the mixed methods research design embedded in a pragmatist paradigm would best serve my research purposes. As mentioned in the introduction section, I have chosen the pragmatist paradigm for all the benefits and facilities it brings to the researcher. The pragmatist paradigm allows for "methodological eclecticism" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 123). Through "paradigm pluralism" (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2011, pp. 287) the pragmatist paradigm enables the researcher to utilize the fortes of different approaches to research within one framework. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research have strengths and weaknesses as discussed earlier and pragmatist paradigm due to its underlying concept of practicality and 'what works' (Creswell and Clark, 2011, pp. 41) provides the researcher with the ability to concoct a practical approach, a mixed methods design, to conduct his study as it rejects the incompatibility of qualitative and quantitative methods (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2011). Also, I find my research philosophy aligned with that of pragmatism according to its perspective of reality. Pragmatist paradigm regards reality as both singular and multiple. That is how I regard language learner autonomy as a construct.

Mixed Methods Research

To conduct the research, I decided to make use of the mixed methods approach for the benefits it would bring to this particular study.

Mixed methods research design. Mixed methods research has become quite popular with researchers as documented in the relevant literature (Creswell & Clark, 2011). It has been hailed as 'the third methodological movement' (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003a, p.5), 'the third research paradigm' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 15), 'a new star in the social science sky' (Mayring, 2007, p. 1) and 'multiple ways of seeing and hearing' (Greene, 2007, p. 20). Mixed methods research helps put together qualitative and quantitative data to explain a trend supported by individual stories (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This was the main reason behind my choice of mixed methods research design for conducting the research. To better understand mixed methods research it is useful to learn about its definition. Creswell and Clark (2011) present a conclusive definition of mixed methods research that focuses on methods, philosophy and research design. According to this definition, mixed methods research is a research design driven by the philosophical assumptions that provide the grounds for the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The combination occurs in phase or phases of the research vis-a-vis data collection and analysis through a mixture of the approaches with the central premise that "such an eclectic approach outperforms either of the quantitative and qualitative approaches alone" in responding to the research problem (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 5).

Advocacy of mixed methods research design and its tenets are not meant to undermine the importance of either qualitative or quantitative approach (Creswell and Clark, 2011). At certain times one of the approaches mentioned would be "*the* approach to use" (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 7). Therefore, the researcher who chooses the mixed methods research needs to justify the rationale behind his choice of research design. There are certain circumstances that

require the researcher to employ mixed methods research. Creswell and Clark (2011) mentions six different needs basis that call for a mixed methods research design thus: one data source may be insufficient, to explain initial results; to generalize exploratory findings; to enhance a study with a second method; to best employ a theoretical stance; and to understand a research objective through multiple research phases (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Regarding the present study, I found the mixed methods research design suitable as it corresponded with several needs as pointed out by Creswell & Clark (2011). In my opinion, to respond to the research questions as discussed earlier, one source of data was insufficient and having both qualitative as well as quantitative strands would further enhance the study results.

Research Approach Rationale

I found mixed methods research as the suitable design for this study for the following reasons: for all their merits, qualitative and quantitative approaches both have their own limitations. While qualitative inquiry presents a more detailed portrayal of a problem, the quantitative approach yields a universal and generalizable one. I assumed having both of these vehicles at my disposal would help me to adequately respond to the research questions. The research houses two different strands of qualitative and quantitative. Having said that, however, I should acknowledge that it is extremely rare for a mixed methods research to be completely balanced. Accordingly, the present research is structured as qualitative dominant. I aim to study the current status of the promotion of language learner autonomy based on perceptions of the notion that are prevalent in Ontario's ESL context. Given that participants' perceptions are inherently subjective and unique to individuals, I needed to employ the qualitative strand to be able to tap into this subjectivity. In my view, it is only through the qualitative lens that a researcher can detect and explore the uniqueness that would remain hidden if a positivist

approach were adopted. However, I also believed that using the quantitative strand with the associated quantification where feasible, i.e., for the ESL learners in this study, would add rigor to the research. In other words, the use of mixed methods research enabled me to make use of the strengths of both qualitative as well as quantitative means of inquiry while compensating for the shortcomings that either of the two designs would have brought to his research if used alone.

Convergence Model. The mixed methods research (MMR) design can be fixed and/or emergent (Creswell and Clark, 2011). The present study made use of a fixed MMR design, meaning that the use of both quantitative and qualitative strands was predetermined by the researcher due to the needs and epistemological positioning of the study. After scrutinizing a variety of MMR models and designs, I opted for the convergence model variant of the triangulation design among the four major types of mixed methods designs namely, the Triangulation Design, the Embedded Design, the Explanatory Design, and the Exploratory Design as introduced by Creswell (2006). Citing Creswell, Plano Clark, et al. (2003) Creswell (2006) describes the triangulation model as "The most common and well-known approach to mixing methods" (p. 62). Triangulation design is used "to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic" (Morse, 1991, p. 122) to shed light on the research problem. I found this model the most suitable design for my study as it allowed me to compare and contrast both quantitative and qualitative strands of the study to respond to the research questions. The convergence model (Creswell, 1999) allows the researcher to separately collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data and then have the results converge in the interpretation stage; hence the name "convergence". The model has also been referred to as "concurrent triangulation design" (Creswell, Plano Clark, et al., 2003) as it allows for a single phase, same time yet separate quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2006). According to

Creswell (2006) efficiency and the possibility of separately collecting and analyzing the two different strands of data are among the strengths of the convergence model of MMR.

Participants

Using a mixed methods research design, I aimed to study TESL trainers', ESL instructors', and ESL learners' perceptions of the promotion of language learner autonomy. The study was conducted using two strands of quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative strand. Due to participant recruitment limitations, I could only perform the quantitative strand of the study with the one group of ESL learners. It would not have been feasible to recruit the required number of TESL trainers, and ESL instructors with the adequacy required to yield statistical power for a sound and reliable quantitative study.

Demographics. A total of 114 participants from 3 ESL colleges and 2 LINC centers in Ontario participated in the survey. There were 75 females and 39 males (N=114), whose ages ranged from 18 to 45, with a median of 23, and mode of 21.

The participants identified themselves with different races/ethnicities including Chinese, Arab, Latin American, Korean, African, and Middle Eastern.

Qualitative strand. A total of 18 participants, 3 TESL trainers (2 females, 1 male), 6 ESL instructors (all females), and 9 ESL learners (3 females, 6 males) were recruited for the interviews from 5 ESL colleges and LINC centers in Ontario.

Table 3. 1 Interview participant demographics, TESL trainers, ESL instructors

Pseudonym	Gender	Position	Language School
Anna	Female	TESL trainer	ESL College 2
Alex	Male	TESL trainer	ESL College 1
Emma	Female	TESL trainer	LINC Center 2
Sylvie	Female	ESL instructor	LINC Center 1
Emily	Female	ESL instructor	LINC Center 1
Alicia	Female	ESL instructor	LINC Center 2
Sarah	Female	ESL instructor	LINC Center 1
Adrienne	Female	ESL instructor	LINC Center 2
Kelly	Female	ESL instructor	ESL College 3

Table 3. 2 Interview participant demographics, ESL learners

Pseudonyms	Gender/Ethnic background	Language school	Proficiency level
Eric	Male/Chinese	ESL College 1	Intermediate
Nathan	Male/Arab, Qatari	ESL College 2	Intermediate
Flora	Female/Chinese	ESL College 3	Intermediate
David	Male/ South Korean	ESL College 2	Intermediate
Ali	Male/Arab, Syrian	ESL College 1	Intermediate
Joana	Female/Arab, Lebanese	LINC Center 1	Intermediate, CLB 6
Selena	Female/Chinese	LINC Center 2	Intermediate, CLB 6
Mahmoud	Male/Arab, Lebanese	LINC Center 1	Intermediate, CLB 6
Alan	Male/Chinese	ESL College 2	Intermediate

Contexts

Three ESL colleges and two LINC centers offering ESL programs were randomly selected for the purpose of the study. The rationale for choosing both LINC centers and ESL colleges was to have both PBLA and non-PBLA contexts included in the study. The government-funded ESL programs in Ontario are required to apply PBLA and the binder, the Language Companion. The private ESL context, as well as ESL colleges, are not under such obligation and for the most part, apply their own ESL curricula. The names of the sites are not disclosed in the study. Pseudonyms have been assigned to each site of the study to respect their confidentiality.

Methods

In pursuit of my inquiry as to how Ontario's ESL context had responded to the growing need for the promotion of language learner autonomy I conducted the study to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What does 'language learner autonomy' mean to English language TESL trainers, instructors, and learners in Ontario's ESL context?

RQ2: To what extent, according to the participants of the study, does the promotion of learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?

RQ3: How desirable and feasible do TESL trainers and ESL instructors feel it is to promote learner autonomy?

RQ4. What challenges do teachers in Ontario's ESL context face in helping their learners become more autonomous?

RQ5. What roles do teachers assume in ESL classrooms in relation to the promotion of language learner autonomy?

Instrumentation and Data Collection

For all its merits, a convergence model of MMR housing both strands of qualitative and quantitative was used in a qualitative dominant study to investigate the perceptions of the participants, i.e. TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners.

Qualitative strand

Interviews. Owing to the ease of access interviews provide to individuals' perceptions and constructions of reality Punch (2011) describes interviews as "the most prominent data collection" method in qualitative research (Punch, 2011, p. 144). A large number of references can be drawn serving as evidence to the usefulness of interviews in research. Punch, 2011; Fontana and Frey 1994; Patton 2002; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009; Patton, 2002 among many others in the literature emphasize how interviews help enhance research through presenting an understanding of the mentality of human beings, perceptions, and judgments. Through the interview, the researcher is enabled to discover and explore areas hidden to the quantitative means of study no matter how detailed or well developed they might be.

Interviews have been categorized in different ways: (a) informal conversational interview; (b) general interview guide approach; and (c) standardized open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002), structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Fontana and Frey, 1994), semi-standardized, and non-standardized (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander, 1990). For the purpose of conducting the present research, I made use of semi-structured interviews. Unlike the structured interview with its rigid framework, the semi-structured interview offers respondents predetermined questions in an open manner, meaning that the respondents enjoy a sense of freedom with regards to the responses and are not limited to predetermined choices.

My Research Interviews. Due to the personal, subjective and unique features of the participants' perceptions of the promotion of language learner autonomy, I found semi-structured interviews as the most revealing instrument that could be used in fulfilling the purpose of the qualitative strand of the study. Specifically designed semi-structured interviews were used for each group of participants. The interviews were inspired by well-designed, researcher-developed instruments by Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) for TESL trainers and ESL instructors, and Fumin and Li (2012) for ESL learners. A duration of 30 minutes was allocated to each interview which began with participants introducing themselves to have them ease into the interview.

The interviews intended for TESL trainers and ESL instructors each contained 10 questions asking their perceptions of learner autonomy and autonomous learner, the contribution of learner autonomy to learners' language learning experience, desirability, feasibility, challenges of promoting learner autonomy, PBLA, strategies, teachers' roles, and context. TESL trainers were also asked if they encouraged ESL instructors to promote learner autonomy and ESL instructors were asked if/how they promoted learner autonomy in their classrooms.

The interview intended for ESL learners contained 13 questions. The questions designed for the students comprised of two major groups. In one group, the questions aimed at exploring ESL learners' general perceptions of learner autonomy, freedom in making decisions regarding their language learning experience, having the choice and a voice in their learning, and taking responsibility for their learning. The second group aimed at discovering if the teachers introduced and encouraged activities that helped promote learner autonomy. These activities included thinking about learning and individual learning styles, planning for learning, setting goals, monitoring progress, self-assessment, documenting learning using a language portfolio,

searching and using online sources, and forming online groups. The final question asked if the teachers used any specific strategies to further motivation and reduce stress in learners.

Quantitative Strand. Due to the feasibility issues with regards to the unavailability of sufficient participants in the case of the two groups of TESL trainers and ESL instructors to yield adequate statistical power for a reliable quantitative study, the survey was conducted with ESL learners to investigate teachers' roles in relation to the promotion of learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. 114 ESL learners were recruited from five sites, three ESL colleges and two LINC centers.

Questionnaire. Questionnaires provide research with "unprecedented efficiency in terms of (a) researcher time, (b) researcher effort, and (c) financial resources" (Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2010, p. 6). Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010), also highlight the versatility as yet another outstanding advantage of questionnaires. "A well-constructed questionnaire can reduce the bias of interviewer effects and thus increase the consistency and reliability of the results" (Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2010, p. 6). Through the use of a well-developed questionnaire, the researcher will have access to a large number of participants, with minimal bias of interviewer effects at a time-effective manner.

Learners' Questionnaire. To study the perceptions of language learners, I had to look for an instrument which would fit the purpose of the study. After carefully studying the relevant literature seeking an instrument that would reveal whether teachers in the ESL context indeed utilized strategies that would result in the promotion of language learner autonomy, I came across a solid questionnaire developed by Fumin and Li (2012) designed specifically to explore language learners' perceptions of the roles assumed by English language teachers to develop language learner autonomy. Fumin and Li (2012) developed their questionnaire Focusing on the

"relevant theories and empirical studies on the relations between learner autonomy and teachers' roles" (p. 52). The questionnaire underwent the drafting and piloting procedures to ensure its validity. The final version of the questionnaire contains 24 five-point Likert scale (1=never, 2=seldom, 3=occasionally, 4=often, 5=always) items. Note should be taken that due to the highly contextual nature of an item in the original questionnaire, i.e., item number 11: *"My English teacher encourages us to go to English Corner"*, this item was modified and changed to "*My English teacher encourages us to make use of online resources"* (Appendix E). The item maintained the role of the teacher as resource facilitator. Based on the literature, four themes of teacher roles as subscales, namely learning regulator, resource facilitator, classroom organizer, and study guide were identified and the items on the questionnaire stemmed from the same these themes:

- The first subscale, Study guide, included four items: *My English teacher communicates with us and learns about our difficulties in learning English, My English teacher helps us make short-term English study plans, My English teacher helps us make medium-and-long term English study plans,* and *My English teacher tells us about English learning strategies and methods in class.*
- The second subscale, classroom organizer included five items: *My English teacher organizes group work in class, My English teacher organizes pair work in class, My English teacher organizes English debates in class, My English teacher assigns us to prepare English presentations on a particular topic after class and give them in class,* and *My English teacher assigns us to prepare English short plays after class and present them in class.*

- The third subscale, learning regulator included nine items: *My English teacher joins our English activity, such as English Week, English debates and English speaking contests, My English teacher opens up public channels for communication, such as public e-mail account, My English teacher encourages us to reflect on our learning process, My English teacher checks and evaluates our English study at regular intervals, My English teacher encourages us to make self-assessment, My English teacher encourages students to give peer assessment, My English teacher can motivate my interest in learning English well, My English teacher can help me gain my confidence in learning English well by praising or encouraging me,* and *My English teacher can help me overcome such negative affective factors as anxiety, nervousness, and shyness.*
- The fourth subscale, resource facilitator included six items: *My English teacher encourages us to do peer study after class, My English teacher encourages us to use online resources, My English teacher encourages us to listen to English news after class, My English teacher encourages us to read English newspapers and magazines after class, My English teacher recommends useful English reference books, and My English teacher recommends useful websites about English study.*

Procedures

Upon completion of ethics approval procedures, I began with the quantitative strand of the study, i.e. the ESL learners' questionnaire. The questionnaire was first piloted using 30 ESL learners' similar to final participants of the study. Next, the questionnaire was administered to the participants of the study in three ESL colleges and two LINC centers across Ontario.

The first step was to pilot the questionnaire. 30 participants similar to the final participants of the study were recruited from ESL College 1 for the piloting phase. In order to

investigate the reliability and item efficiency of the questionnaire, Cronbach alpha, item-total correlation, and subscales inter-correlation were employed. As detailed in Chapter 5, a thorough analysis of the results suggested that the questionnaire was suitable for the study. As elaborated in Chapter 5, employing the same measures for the final participants of the study (n=114) recruited from three ESL colleges and two LINC centers offered assurances of the reliability and item efficiency of the questionnaire. Next, to study construct validity of the questionnaire, after making sure that the required statistical assumptions were met, I ran a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) which suggested that the autonomy scale employed in this study had sufficient construct validity. The PCA further revealed the loadings onto the four subscales as detailed in chapter 5. As for the main data analysis, I employed several processes including a comparison of subscales totals with each other, a comparison of subscale totals with theoretical mean, and a comparison of items with theoretical mean. Detailed elaboration including the rationale for the use of each particular statistical means is presented in Chapter 5. Next, I presented in details a discussion and conclusion of the quantitative findings.

The next step was to conduct the qualitative strand of the study, i.e. the interviews. A total of 18 participants including 3 TESL trainers, 6 ESL instructors, and 9 ESL learners from 5 ESL colleges and LINC centers across Ontario participated in the interviews each lasting for 30 minutes. To respect the convenience of the participants, all interviews, except one which was recorded via phone at the request of the interviewee, were held at the language school where the participants were recruited from. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. I transcribed every interview, and listened to each several times while taking notes. Several themes based on recurrence, frequency, and overlapping of words were identified. Next, based on the primary themes, subthemes emerged. Using highlighting markers, I grouped all

themes, subthemes, and relevant remarks. A thorough analysis of the findings led to the discussion and conclusion presented in chapter 4. The analysis of the qualitative data provided an in-depth understanding of the research questions.

Finally, as detailed in chapter 6, I merged the data elicited through qualitative and quantitative means to present a comprehensive understanding of teachers' roles with regards to the promotion of language learner autonomy.

Ethical Considerations

Extreme care was given to respect the ethical considerations and requirements. The study did not begin until I received the Research Ethics approvals from Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) and ethics approval from each site of the study. The confidentiality of each participant was observed. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym. No identifier, including the name of the language school, was used in the study whatsoever. The participants were at no point exposed to any risk as a result of the study. All participants participated at their own will and were in no form or shape coerced by the researcher or their language school. The participants were informed that participation was voluntary and they were not obliged to answer all of the questions of the questionnaire/interview, all data would be absolutely confidential, and that their name would not be used if the study was published, they may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on their future academic status, all data collected would remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study, if they chose to withdraw from the study, their data would be removed and destroyed from the database, and the data collected from the study would be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the Faculty of Education building and on a secured computer drive.

Summary

The third chapter of the study, the methodology, begins with a concise introduction about the research, what I intended to do and how I aimed at conducting my research. I discussed research designs in general and then presented my rationale for mixed methods research design as my preference. Accordingly, the shortcomings of different research designs vis-a-vis the present study were highlighted. Next, a detailed account of MMR along with the reasons why I found it as a suitable design for my research was presented in the research approach rationale. The section then continued with methods where I presented the research questions, followed up by instrumentation and data collection. The instruments I used in the study, i.e. the learners' questionnaire and the interviews were explained in detail. Next, the participants, the context, and the procedure were thoroughly discussed.

In the next chapter, I will present the qualitative strand of the study, findings, results, discussion, and conclusion.

CHAPTER FOUR

Qualitative Results

The following chapter provides in detail the findings obtained through the qualitative instrument of the study (the semi-structured interviews designed for the three groups of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL students). The semi-structured interviews were conducted in-person with the exception of one, which was conducted and recorded via telephone. This chapter presents data analysis procedures, followed by the data elicited through the semi-structured interviews, and the selected relevant analyses. Following this, I present a detailed interpretation as well as a thorough discussion of the findings.

The findings of the qualitative strand of the study pertained to Research Questions 1 through 5 presented in chapter 1 of the thesis. A detailed analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of eight themes. These themes were identified based on recurrence, frequency, and overlapping of words. The themes included: *Perceptions of learner autonomy, Contribution of promoting learner autonomy to L2 learning, Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA), Desirability, Feasibility, Challenges, Teachers' roles,* and *Context.* These themes had certain sub-themes which will be explained in this chapter.

Qualitative Data Analysis Procedures

Eighteen participants from three groups of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL students were recruited for the qualitative strand of the study. As detailed in the methodology chapter, the study, though using a mixed methods research design, is qualitative-dominant owing to the subjective and unique quality of participants' perceptions of the abstract construct of language learner autonomy upon which the research is based. The participants included 3 TESL trainers, 6 ESL instructors, and 9 ESL students from multiple ESL sites across Ontario. To have a comprehensive understanding of the current status of the promotion of learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context, I decided not to limit the study to one group only. Semi-structured interviews were designed for each group of the participants. The interview questions of TESL trainers and ESL instructors were very similar since TESL trainers also acted as ESL teachers. The interviews of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL trainers consisted of ten and thirteen semi-structured questions respectively. A duration of 30 minutes was allocated for each interview.

The interview for ESL students was comprised of thirteen questions. Each interview started with an introduction to ease the participants into the interview. They were asked to introduce themselves, and speak a little bit about their language learning experience and background. The questions designed for the students comprised two major groups. In one group, the questions aimed at exploring ESL learners' general perceptions of learner autonomy, freedom in making decisions regarding their language learning experience(s), having the choice and a voice, and taking responsibility of their learning. The second group aimed at discovering if the teachers introduced and encouraged activities that would promote learner autonomy. These activities included thinking about learning and individual learning styles, planning for learning,

setting goals, monitoring progress, self-assessment, documenting learning using a language portfolio, searching and using online sources, and forming online groups. The final question asked if the teachers used any specific strategies to further motivation, and reduce stress in learners.

The Interviews for TESL trainers and ESL instructors each comprised ten semi-structured interviews. The questions asked the participants about their perceptions of learner autonomy, its contribution to L2 learning, their definition of learner autonomy and autonomous learner, how they developed these perceptions, i.e. how they learned about learner autonomy, how the participants felt about desirability, feasibility, and challenges of promoting learner autonomy. The participants were also asked about the roles of the teacher in an autonomy-inspiring environment.

The majority of the questions for the two groups were identical, except for two questions. The ESL instructors were asked (how) they tried to promote learner autonomy, and whether or not they used any specific strategies. The ESL instructors were also asked if they encouraged learners to document their progress using a language portfolio. The TESL trainers were asked if they taught the subject of learner autonomy in TESL courses, and if they encouraged teachers to make use of language portfolio in their classrooms.

Manual coding. To analyze the data, upon completion of the transcription process, I started reading the transcripts thoroughly, focusing on the recurring patterns and themes. I made notes as I read through each transcript carefully to discover the most frequent and salient themes. Eight themes were discovered as the most frequent. These themes included *Perceptions about learner autonomy, Contribution of learner autonomy to L2 learning, Portfolio-Based Language*

Assessment (PBLA), Desirability, *Feasibility*, *Challenges, Teachers' roles,* and *Context.* Next, after thoroughly studying the transcripts several times, I grouped the participants' views corresponding to each of the main themes mentioned. Using different color highlighters, I highlighted the most frequent responses based on different groups. Certain sub-themes surfaced for each main theme. Focusing on the sub-themes, the comments were grouped. Each group of the comments was then analyzed, and discussed thoroughly. The analysis of the themes corresponding with research questions were used to respond to the questions in order to provide an overall in-depth understanding. Note should be taken that to respect the confidentiality of the participants, each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

In the next section, I will present data findings and quotes regarding Research Question 1. The first research question was about participants' perceptions of learner autonomy, and what it meant to them.

Research Question 1 Results

Research Question 1

What does 'language learner autonomy' mean to English language teacher educators, teachers, and learners in Ontario's ESL context?

Perceptions. Responses to Research Question 1 identified with participants' perception. The responses were divided into two groups of TESL trainers-ESL instructors as one, and ESL learners as another. The rationale for combining TESL trainers and ESL teachers was that the TESL trainers also performed as ESL instructors. They were either currently occupied as ESL instructors as well or had experience teaching as certified ESL instructors in Ontario. The second group was ESL learners whose views were transcribed, analyzed, and compared with other

participants of the study. The TESL trainers'-ESL instructors' views on perceptions of learner autonomy led to the emergence of the sub-themes of *definition, goal-setting, decision making, taking responsibility* and *Investment*, i*ndividuality/personalization/independence, autonomous learner, awareness raising, documenting/PBLA,* and *development of perceptions***.** The ESL learners' perceptions of learner autonomy also led to certain subthemes of *goal-setting, awareness raising,* and *documenting*.

Perceptions of learner autonomy, TESL trainers-ESL Instructors. Upon a thorough exploration of the ESL context in multiple sites of the study, I developed the understanding that there appeared to be a distinct dichotomy in the participants' perceptions of learner autonomy. The distinction was between the participants involved with the Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) model of instruction primarily used in the government-funded ESL programs such as *"Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada"* (LINC) and other ESL contexts in Ontario. As explained earlier in the literature review, PBLA is a model of instruction with the explicit aim of promoting learner autonomy in a certain, predetermined manner, whereby teachers are required to design tasks and tests based on a preliminary needs assessment process unique to each individual student. The needs assessment is formed through the teacher-learner collaboration exploring the learner's needs that range widely covering a variety of different issues from job-hunting to education, etc. PBLA tries to observe the principles of the promotion of language learner autonomy, therefore the individuals involved with PBLA whether TESL trainers or ESL, acquire a relatively richer understanding of language learner autonomy. With reference to the above-mentioned, the perceptions of those involved with PBLA appeared to be heavily influenced by their understanding of PBLA. Some went to the extent to equate

PBLA with learner autonomy. Whether PBLA is indeed fulfilling its intended purposes is something that will be discussed later in this chapter.

The following were the subthemes identified with TESL trainers-ESL instructors' perceptions of learner autonomy:

Definition.

"*Well, to me it means having the ability to confidently speak or do something without the fear of making a mistake"* (Sylvie, interview, September 23, 2016).

"Learner autonomy to me means that the students set their own goals and objectives and work independently or semi-independently to advance their own individual aims and goals" (Emily, interview, September 26, 2016).

"*I think learner autonomy is, in a sense, students' ownership of their language learning experience. Ownership of the language and how they actually use the language to function. Also, the strategies that they use to further develop the language learning strategies and developing such strategies…being responsible for kind of going into different directions and experiments about their own language learning"* (Anna, interview, September 29, 2016).

TESL trainers', and ESL instructors' understanding of learner autonomy varied widely with some being very distant from the definition of learner autonomy as suggested in the literature.

Some views reflected an extent of inaccuracy such as the one stated by an ESL teacher in LINC Center 1, Sylvie, who equated learner autonomy with the ability to speak confidently without inhibitions of making mistakes. Such an interpretation cannot be considered as a definition of learner autonomy. Another ESL instructor struggled with defining learner autonomy and said she had never heard of the term before. On the other hand, some were very accurate and in line with definitions of learner autonomy presented in the relevant literature. For example, Emily highlighted the notions of goal-setting, interdependence, taking charge, and pursuing one's goals. A noteworthy point in Emily's definition of learner autonomy was that she did not feel that learner autonomy meant learning in isolation. She actually emphasized on learners working "*semi-independently*" to materialize their goals. Anna, a TESL trainer from ESL school 2, presented a comprehensive definition of learner autonomy. The term "*ownership*" in Anna's remarks revealed her thorough knowledge of learner autonomy. She further discussed developing a sense of responsibility, exploring, developing, and implementing certain learning strategies, and choosing directions for learning as constituents of the construct of learner autonomy.

An interesting observation was that some of the participants were more comfortable with describing an autonomous learner. This was especially true with those who had a hard time defining learner autonomy. Out of six ESL instructors, two struggled with defining learner autonomy, with one saying she had never heard of the term.

Autonomous learner.

"*Someone who is responsible for learning not just in class but outside of the classroom"* (Sylvie, interview, September 23, 2016).

“I am not gonna have to be on her. She’s gonna do it on her own. She’s gonna care” (Alicia, interview, September 27, 2016)

"Autonomous learners are curious. I think that psychologically they need to be in a place where they are comfortable with taking control of their learning and they are confident that their choices are good choices” (Emily, interview, September 26, 2016).

"An autonomous learner is a learner who is motivated to be in class and who makes progress based on their individual needs" (Emma, interview, October 19, 2016)

"A learner who is engaged in class...would ask questions... would follow information or guidance or tips that the teacher passed to him or her... putting the time at home" (Anna, interview, September 29, 2016).

A recurring theme emerging from TESL trainers’ and ESL teachers’ perceptions of learner autonomy was that of their understanding of the construct of an autonomous learner. This theme served as a complement to participants’ definition of learner autonomy. The following sub-themes surfaced as participants tried to present a definition of an autonomous learner: *responsible*, *independent*, and *motivated*. For instance, Sylvie focused on the notion of learners being responsible both inside and outside of the classroom. Alicia emphasized being responsible and independent, and pointed to motivation and investment by saying that an autonomous learner is someone who *"cares"*. Emily, another ESL teacher, used the word “*curious*” to refer to motivation and also highlighted learners being responsible for their learning and decision making. By saying that learners had to feel confident that their choices were “*good choices*” she was indeed referring to a self-assessment regarding the choices as part of taking control over

one's learning. Focusing on motivation, Emma actually directly used the word "*motivated*" in her definition of an autonomous learner and also highlighted being responsible and independent for making progress according to their goals and needs. The concepts of motivation and investment were also evident in Anna's definition of autonomous learner who described it as a learner who was "*engaged in class*" and someone who spent time outside the classroom for their learning. The subthemes of responsible, independent, and motivated were quite evident and the most recurring in these particular participants' perceptions.

Goal-setting.

"Learner autonomy means that the students set their own goals and objectives and work independently or semi-independently to advance their own individual aims and goals" (Emily, interview, September 26, 2016).

This was the most frequent subtheme emerging in the interviews with TESL trainers and ESL teachers. The majority of the participants emphasized the importance and benefits of encouraging learners to set their own objectives with regards to their language learning experience. They suggested that once teachers knew about learners' individual needs, they could then tailor teaching in accordance with such needs. This was of course especially highlighted by the teachers who taught according to the PBLA instructions. The PBLA model of teaching requires teachers to carry out a preliminary needs assessment with the learners to find out in what areas they intended to improve their proficiency skills and then design real-life tasks to help the learners achieve those goals. What made it more valuable, according to many of the participants, was that these goals had to have real-life relevance. Therefore, learners easily related to them as they felt that they could communicate with the speakers of the target language. Moreover, setting

goals by the learners themselves made them feel they were responsible for their learning. Alicia, an ESL instructor at LINC Center 1, in her interview made use of the cases of two of her students saying that one of her learners was a grandmother whose aim was to learn English to be able to communicate with her grandchildren while another student of hers regarded learning English as a pathway to university. She continued by saying that *"now that I know about their goals, I can teach them differently because that is the right thing to do"* (interview, September 27, 2016). Goal setting, therefore, was an essential and integral part of language learner autonomy according to the participants. Describing learner autonomy, Emily equated it to goal-setting and taking measures to materialize those goals. Emily's interpretation of learner autonomy clearly portrays the importance she attached to goal-setting. This was echoed in the interviews with most of the participants especially those who taught in the PBLA system.

Decision making.

"The students have the freedom to pick what they want and talk about it freely and make their own decisions" (Sarah, interview, October 3, 2016).

"I would define learner autonomy as giving the learners the tools that help them to learn the language in their own area of interest the way they want. Autonomy to me means that you [the learner] *are not relying on someone all the time. You decide how to go about your learning"* (interview, October 19, 2016). (Emma, interview, October 19, 2016).

Giving the students the choice and encouraging them to make decisions about their learning were mentioned by most of the participants as an integral part of promoting learner autonomy. Granting learners the freedom to make decisions about their learning, encouraging

them to do so, and encouraging the learners to feel free to express themselves without inhibitions help get them involved in their learning. The concept of decision making occurred very frequently during the interviews. It was highlighted as an essential element in the construct of learner autonomy. Sarah[1], an ESL instructor at LINC Center 1, stated that learner autonomy meant that learners made decisions about their learning. It was also emphasized that by giving learners the choice, teachers would indeed empower their learners. Learners would have a say in their language learning experience. As nicely put by another participant, Emma, teachers could empower their learners by enabling them to learn *"in their own area of interest the way they want"* (interview, October 19, 2016). Emma further described an autonomous learner as someone who would not rely on the teacher for their learning, but rather someone who makes decisions about their own learning.

Encouraging learners to make decisions about their learning was also mentioned as a challenge faced by teachers in fostering language learner autonomy due to some students' reluctance towards it. This will be further explained in the section discussing challenges in promoting learner autonomy.

Taking responsibility, Investment.

"Some students need to be almost retrained in the aspect that this is YOURS. It's YOUR learning. What is it that YOU want? I have always tried to encourage them to say what is it that THEY want to learn. Why are they there? What's their purpose for being in my class" (Adrienne, interview, October 5, 2016).

[1] Name are pseudonyms to protect participants' privacy. This information has to come much sooner in this chapter…

Many of the participants felt learner autonomy was learners taking responsibility for their learning experience and investing in it. According to most of the participants, helping learners recognize that they have an investment in their learning makes them feel more responsible towards their learning. The learners would consider themselves as stakeholders in the process of learning. Sarah remarked, *"Learner autonomy is when a student has investment in their learning"* (interview, October 3, 2016). Taking responsibility was portrayed as the building block in the foundation of the concept of learner autonomy throughout most of the interviews.

Individuality, Independence, Personalization.

"I think from my years of teaching I understood that you really have to focus on each individual's needs and motivate so much more than just doing a general talk on what you think they might need in English" (Adrienne, interview, October 5, 2016).

"Learner autonomy is their [learners'] *ability to accomplish tasks and kind of guide their OWN learning to make progress on their OWN…to be able to go out and maybe identify areas that THEY need to work and find solutions…and actually pursue that without the teacher telling them"* (Alex, interview, October 7, 2016).

The concepts of individuality, independence, and personalization occurred numerous times during the interviews. It was emphasized that every individual had their own agenda. According to many of the participants, recognition was extremely important and one of the vital constituents of learner autonomy. Adrienne emphasized the importance of individuals' needs regarding their education.

Individuality, independence, and personalization were among the salient concepts emerging in the interviews. The individuality of the learners is one of the core concepts of learner autonomy. A learner-centered education based on promoting learner autonomy requires the recognition of the individuality of each learner and this was a point which was recognized by the majority of the participants.

Awareness-raising/metacognition.

"Learner autonomy, the way I see it, is how the Learners become conscious about their own learning" (Kelley, interview, October 10, 2016).

Awareness raising was mentioned by some participants during the interviews. However, given its importance, it could be argued that awareness-raising could have received more recognition by the participants. Providing learners with metacognition about learning, and learning how to learn is one of the essential principles of learner autonomy. To feel responsible for their learning and to take charge of it, the learners need to be conscious of their learning. Learners should also be aware of where they are regarding their language learning experience. Models such as the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and the Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) binder, the Language Companion, designed to promote learner autonomy, have a section dedicated to learners' positionality vis-a-vis their learning experience. Furthermore, such awareness facilitates decision-making, and goal-setting in their learning endeavor. Awareness raising was, however, less frequently emphasized in the interviews as compared to other concepts.

Documenting.

"Learner autonomy is *when a student documents their own success and progress"* (Sarah, interview, October 3, 2016).

Documenting was one of the areas where the dichotomy between PBLA and non-PBLA contexts seemed to stand out. The teachers who taught in the PBLA context had hands-on experience with encouraging the learners to document their learning experience using a language portfolio, the Language Companion. In fact, they mostly considered documentation as a tool to foster learner autonomy. Although most of the participants acknowledged that documenting learning process by using a language portfolio was very helpful in promoting language learner autonomy, many teachers in the PBLA context criticized the way the language portfolio, the Language Companion, was designed as burdensome for both teachers and learners. Nevertheless, documenting learning, in general, was to most of the participants beneficial to the learners. This will be elaborated on in details in the PBLA section of this chapter.

Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA)**.** PBLA is relatively a very recent model of language instruction practiced in the ESL context of Ontario. The model is also practiced in other provinces across Canada. But due to certain limitations, the current study only explores the status quo in the province of Ontario.

The PBLA model of instruction was purportedly designed with the explicit aim of fostering learner autonomy in learners. ESL teachers' account of how PBLA has performed since its introduction to the ESL context, however, does not depict the rosy portrayal suggested by its creators. Exploring the perceptions of ESL instructors involved with PBLA, three main recurring themes of advantages, disadvantages, and reforms with certain subthemes were identified. Below I will elaborate on these themes.

PBLA Advantages. Certain advantages were highlighted in the interviews with the participants; however, some of these advantages were mentioned to be potential and not actual in reality. Below I will explain about the advantages associated with instruction based on PBLA:

Real-world relevance. PBLA encourages task-based learning. Upon completion of a needs-assessment, teachers are required to design tasks and tests that have relevance to the real world. The tasks are practiced in class and then there is a test based on the same task in the classroom. Such real-world relevance, the majority of the participants said, prepares learners to communicate in real life. This gives learners further motivation as they find themselves competent to communicate in real life and not just in the enclosed space of the classroom.

Potential to increase learners' investment in learning. According to some teachers, PBLA had the potential to boost learners` investment in their learning as stakeholders. As elaborated in chapter 2, it can be argued that the notion of investment has superseded that of motivation in the literature, thanks in part to the emphasis it places upon the contribution of the learners' personal interest in their learning. The concept of motivation is multidimensional and encompasses notions such as 'attitude', 'enthusiasm', 'mood', 'desire', etc. The increase in a learner's investment in an activity means higher motivation on the part of the learner. According to the participants, PBLA further had the potential to foster learner independence. In reality though, according to participants` views, there were complications which will be discussed in the disadvantages section.

Accountability of teachers. Teachers were required to design certain tasks with real-world relevance and then design tests based on those tasks. The test results, either passed or failed, had to be placed in every learner's binder so that both teachers and learners would have access to it to

see the growth and progress of the learner. Every learner needed to pass a certain number of tests in order to advance to the next level. Teachers were expected to ascertain that the learners maintained their test results in their binders.

Simplicity. Simplicity was mentioned in a number of occasions as one of the advantages of PBLA. Emily said, *"I appreciate the simple language in the Language Companion. They really give learners a window into what our priorities are"* (interview, September 26, 2016). She further said *"the binder has simplified targeting and setting objectives. It is a useful tool to communicate with the learners"* (interview, September 26, 2016). The binders make it easy for both teachers and learners to navigate through the teaching/learning experience.

PBLA disadvantages**.** The majority of the participants had numerous complaints about the implementation of PBLA. Several subthemes were identified with regards to the disadvantages of PBLA:

Inefficient.

"We end up spending a lot of time, with non-teaching activities in our classrooms that take away from the students' time, students' learning, and students' energy that I think would be better served if we worried how to teach/learn stuff than where to put things in the binder" (Adrienne, interview, October 5, 2016).

"The problem is having too much of this [paperwork] *won't allow the teachers to be more flexible to help them [learners] learn, to encourage them"* (Sylvie, interview, September 23, 2016).

"People hate it. PBLA is insanity. It's so unreasonable… so unreasonable. There is absolutely zero reason for it. It's absolutely devastating to the teachers. I can't even tell you how much unnecessary work it is" (Emily, interview, September 26, 2016).

"The idea is good. The implementation is not. The way that they're doing it is not in the best interests of either the teachers or the students. And so they're not reaching their goals. It's too much paperwork and too long to move people. I mean, if you talk about the night time you're talking about 2 years. It's ridiculous" (Adrienne, interview, October 5, 2016).

Many teachers felt that PBLA was rather inefficient. They believed that PBLA demanded a lot of time and energy both from teachers and learners to engage in relatively unproductive activities. The outcomes, they said, did not prove to match the amount of time, energy, and resources spent. Some teachers welcomed the idea of learner autonomy, but did not believe that PBLA and the binder, the Language Companion, were serving the same purpose in practice. A major problem the participants had with PBLA, specifically, the binder was that the teachers were required to design tasks and tests. The tests had to be in accordance with the regulations within the framework of PBLA. Sometimes teachers had a hard time distinguishing what constituted a real-life task. Then, they had to encourage learners to keep a record of all of the tasks and tests and results, along with many other documents in their binders and bring them to the class on a daily basis. Teachers found it too burdensome. According to Sylvie, *"too many administrative things, that sometimes discourages, creates more like a robotic type of atmosphere rather than encouraging autonomy because there are people who are eager to learn, but then they are not really eager to have to fill out this paper, complete this thing or that sheet, and so on"* (interview, September 23, 2016). A problem arising from this was that teachers

simply did not find the time to follow all the instructions. As put by Adrienne, *"I don't literally have the time and I find that it is taking time out of my personal time much more than it ever did. It's a real type of war. It's too much administration. Too much paperwork"* (interview, October 5, 2016)

Backwash effect. Some teachers made complaints about the backwash effect. The learners could only move to the next level if they could complete a certain number of tasks designed by the teacher successfully. The tasks are practiced through the course and the tests are based on the same tasks. According to Emily, *" just teaching for these assessments...you know... is that really real world? It's not real-world...and that bothers me"* (interview, September 26, 2016). All that both teachers and learners care about, was the successful completion of a certain number of tests based on the tasks designed by the teacher.

Controlling.

"I feel like we have to babysit them [the learners] *in the sense that we constantly have to check with them did you do the journal? Did you fill out your goal? What are your goals? Do you remember your goals? What is your goal for listening? It just feels like even though they say it encourages the students to be independent, to know what they want to learn, the teachers always have to check, did you do this? Did you do that?"* (Sylvie, interview, September 23, 2016)

Another problem that teachers found with PBLA was that it failed to fulfil its purpose of promoting learner autonomy because of being too controlling. The PBLA model of teaching and its binder, Language Companion, participants felt, dictated certain things on both teachers and

learners. It required the learners to study in a certain way. In a sense, it imposed a framework on the learners, whereas based on the principles of learner autonomy, the learners should be free to define the framework themselves. The PBLA model of instruction further required the teachers to follow up with the imposition of the framework.

Minimizing teacher autonomy.

"To be honest, teachers don't really have a choice. Most of the teachers find a way to do what is expected but maybe not exactly the way ***they*** *would like it done. Teachers have no autonomy anymore. We feel like our autonomy has been choked. It feels like it's been ripped up from underneath us"* (Adrienne, interview, October 5, 2016)

Another frequent sub-theme was that the way PBLA was implemented, as the participants mentioned, stifled teacher autonomy. Sarah, for instance, complained about how her teaching was effective before the implementation of PBLA, and how she could not teach that way in PBLA system even though that was something that the students would have wanted. In other words, the implementation of PBLA prohibited both teachers and learners from teaching/learning certain constructs in certain ways if it were not in accordance with the predetermined framework of PBLA. Teaching grammar explicitly served as a good example. Teachers were not permitted to teach grammar explicitly even if that were something the learners would have wanted. As another example, Sarah said, "*for example spelling tests. People want to be able to spell, they want to... you know, and they believe that this helps them with their writing, whether there is validity to this or not it seems to be something that the students would have wanted, and they seem to enjoy it. But it has to be deleted because it's not PBLA. So, for my ability to reach out to my audience, I feel that that has definitely been suppressed"* (interview,

October 3, 2016). Needless to say, this manner of practice dictated by PBLA, runs in counter with the spirit of learner autonomy where the learner is given the choice to make decisions about their learning. What if I as a learner I decided that learning grammar explicitly was beneficial to my language learning experience. A system designed to promote learner autonomy should not suppress my decisions as a learner to practice my autonomy. Unfortunately, based on the data elicited from the participants, that was a major setback with PBLA.

Gaps in learning.

"PBLA does build gaps in learning because there's just not enough attention paid to grammar. So, learner autonomy is awesome because students get a stake in the theme or in the task that they want to learn. But I think really ultimately at the end of the day, teacher's the one who sees the problems. The teacher is in a better position to see what a student needs than a student is. Because you don't know what you don't know" (Sarah, interview, October 3, 2016)

As a result of the way PBLA system was designed as discussed in the previous section, some teachers believed that due to the restrictions imposed on teachers with regards to the content and approaches employed, there were certain gaps in learning as some areas did not receive the due emphasis they otherwise should have. Teachers were prohibited from applying certain approaches and teaching certain contents should those contents and approaches fall out of the framework of PBLA.

Raw, Confusing.

"I think many people don't know what they are doing at all…at all…like from all different schools I have seen things in people's binders and I have put a lot of things that are just cuckoo

bananas that are just not calibrated properly. It's just a mess, it's just not properly calibrated and people are not trained, it's just such a mess, it's just absurd" (Emily, interview, September 26, 2016).

Another recurring theme falling in the disadvantage category was that most of the participants found PBLA to be raw and immature. They believed that PBLA system needed a lot of improvement. A major problem was a lack of clarity on how tasks and tests needed to be shaped according to the PBLA framework. Participants' remarks highlighted the urgency of proper training for the teachers. Obviously, if teachers were confused about how to proceed with the PBLA system, there would be a certain level of confusion among their learners as well. In a very interesting remark about the lack of proper training on PBLA Alicia said, *"I think there needs to be more training. I think they shouldn't have installed it (PBLA) yet without having the training. I was hired. I didn't even know what PBLA was. Maybe I shouldn't have been allowed to be hired without it. I have spoken to eight teachers about PBLA and I have got a different answer from each one of them"* (interview, September 27, 2016).

Demotivating.

"What PBLA does to some students is ultimately demotivate them. The constant feedback you would think would be encouraging but in this context is extremely discouraging" (Emily, interview, September 26, 2016).

The way PBLA was implemented could be very demotivating to certain students according to a number of participants. The students were required to complete a task successfully. For example, they needed to master learning how to write a business letter. They

had to take a test on this task twice a week and every time anything was wrong with the task, they were failed and they needed to repeat the task. According to the teachers, this was not only very time-consuming, but demotivating as well. According to some of the teachers, there were certain mistakes that simply could not be corrected in a very short period of time. The Repetition of such mistakes resulted in repetitive failure on the part of the learners leading to pent-up frustration.

It also frustrated other stronger students who learned the subject the first time because the teacher had to, as Emily put it, *"look at the people in the middle"* (interview, September 26, 2016) and advance accordingly. Emily said during the interview, *"PBLA the way we are doing right now is catastrophic, for motivated gifted students. They say I am doing it perfectly, but I'll have to tell them: I know, but we are at this level and we have to do this. So, ha ha! Let's waste your time... let's waste days and days and days of your time. I hate it and they hate it. And when I look at them I am like: sorry, I know"* (interview, September 26, 2016).

Disregard for Cultural predispositions.

"While I think, yeah ideal in Canada, I think that you need to consider that we are working in a multicultural, multigenerational and basically the most diverse environment you can possibly be learning in, with people that have a different cultural expectation of education. Most students expect direct instruction...explicit grammar rules and direct instruction. The feedback from some of my peers who are not Canadian born, but do have English as a second language is that they can't imagine how they could have ever learned English through the PBLA system" (Sarah, interview, October 3, 2016).

Some of the teachers felt that the attitudes towards the construct of learner autonomy depended, to a large extent, on the cultural background of the learners. Most of the participants felt that some cultures were not really open to the concept of learner autonomy. This perspective would lead to some degree of resistance towards the promotion of learner autonomy in learners. This will be further discussed in the challenges toward the promotion of learner autonomy section shortly. It was also emphasized as a disadvantage of the PBLA system as according to many of the teachers it conflicted with the belief of the learners who considered the teacher as THE educator.

Having discussed the advantages and disadvantages of PBLA and the language portfolio, Language Companion, once asked if they would vote for PBLA to stay, four participants out of six voted for it to be removed. One participant urged for radical reforms and only one participant voted for it to stay as it is. The one participant who voted for it to stay was a PBLA trainer at different language schools and institutes.

Reforms to PBLA. When asked about the modifications to PBLA, the participants pointed to several common themes. The majority of the participants called for modifications to PBLA to become practical and productive. The most frequent emerging themes were *training, material development, standardization of rubrics, time* and *class size.*

Training. Almost every participant emphasized the importance of proper training. Even though there have very recently been some sporadic workshops and webinars from different institutions such as TESL Ontario, the confusion among the ESL teachers who teach in LINC centers where PBLA instruction is required highlights the urgent need for properly regulated training. In many cases, teachers were confused about designing a task and eventually the

relevant test to evaluate the performance of the learners. The binder, Language Companion, was also quite problematic for many of the teachers. According to most of the participants, mandatory workshops were required to improve the conditions.

Flexibility. A major problem many teachers had with PBLA was with the restrictions and prohibitions it imposed on teachers. These restrictions had two major sources according to the participants. Firstly, PBLA prohibited the explicit instruction of certain things such as grammar which otherwise might have been regarded as beneficial by either teachers or learners. Most of the ESL instructors demanded an increase in the flexibility in instruction in a manner that provided them with more teacher autonomy. Teachers favored being able to teach contents in a way which was regarded beneficial by either teachers or learners. Secondly, PBLA and the binder, Language Companion, were so demanding in terms of paperwork and organization, according to participants, that teachers simply could not allocate any further time to practice other materials and contents with their learners.

Standardization of rubrics, material development.

"The government should update some of its curricula because we really don't have time to write curriculum, write rubrics, write tests and help students. That is far beyond the scope of a teaching job" (Sarah, interview, October 3, 2016).

"*I would like to see updated LINC books. I'd like to see an updated curriculum that makes it very easy to cross reference the learning objective with tasks that are based on the CLB document"* (Emily, interview, September 26, 2016).

According to the participants, PBLA, as designed currently, required teachers to develop material according to certain principles. The tasks, tests, and rubrics to be developed by the

teachers needed to have real-world relevance. As useful as this seems to be, many teachers had complaints about developing material on their own.

Sylvie, another ESL teacher who taught in the PBLA system said, "*The lack of standardization is going to ultimately affect the students' ability accessing the community"* (interview, September 23, 2016). Sarah further added, "*With more of a system, I just wanna call it a skeleton… so, if the government can provide us with a stronger skeleton, then we will have the freedom and the autonomy to develop our classroom materials"* (interview, October 3, 2016)

Time.

"*If I could do something about it, I would give the teachers more time, to work with each level"* (Sarah, interview, October 3, 2016).

Two other issues participants had with PBLA were the constraints brought about by time limits and class size. Emily said one of the problems with PBLA and its assessments was the inadequate time between the instruction of a certain item and the assessment of the learners' performance on that item. The learners were assessed before they mastered the item and then after they failed the test several times, they felt demotivated. The issue of time restrictions was echoed in many other comments by the participants.

Class size.

"From a teacher's perspective when you've got 20 people with such a variance and goals it can be difficult to help students stay motivated to achieve their goals. I think to really work effectively classrooms really need to be 10 students per teacher and I think that's the only way that it can be very effective" (Sarah, interview, Oct 3, 2016).

"*I think PBLA was made for about 10 students because you can keep track of 10 students. I have over 28 in the morning, and 28 in the afternoon, so to feasibly do this is very difficult. It's very difficult to keep track of 28 people, with 28 very different learning styles, learning paths learning abilities"* (Adrienne, interview, October 5, 2016).

The participants mentioned large class sizes as a major problem for the proper implementation of PBLA. Timewise, PBLA instruction was mentioned to be very demanding. Teachers were required to tailor tasks based on the individual needs of each individual learner. After all, learner-centeredness and the paramount value attached to the individuality of the learners as the core principle of PBLA and learner autonomy made it incumbent upon the teachers to spend a considerable amount of time on each individual to address their needs.

Development of perceptions**.** Regarding the participants' perceptions about learner autonomy, I deemed it of value to explore how TESL trainers and ESL instructors developed their understanding of this construct. Three sub-themes were identified based on the participants' elicited responses. The themes included: PBLA training, TESL training, and personal experience. The responses revealed that the ESL teachers who had undergone the PBLA training had a much better understanding of learner autonomy. Although, the downside of being exposed to PBLA training was that even though PBLA ESL teachers had learned some fundamentals about learner autonomy, for the most part their understanding of the construct was directly associated with PBLA to the extent that some equated PBLA with learner autonomy. Emily for instance said, *"in terms of training as a teacher, I think the first time it started to come up was when PBLA was discussed. And how the function of PBLA was to increase learner autonomy"* (interview, September 26, 2016). Emily also indicated that she had already learned about learner

autonomy through her own education at a Montessori school where she studied as a student. According to Emily, Montessori was all about learner autonomy. This, however, had nothing to do with her training as an ESL instructor. Adrienne another experienced teacher who was involved with ESL instruction in Ontario for years said, *"Not until recently it hadn't come up as a buzzword. It has just come up primarily with PBLA"* (interview, October 5, 2016).

PBLA was the most frequently cited theme when it came to exploring the participants' understanding of learner autonomy among ESL teachers in the PBLA context. In terms of frequency, it was followed by teachers' personal experience and interest. The least frequent was TESL training with only two out of the nine participants suggesting that they learned about learner autonomy in their TESL training. Anna and Alex, two TESL trainers' comments provided evidence for this. They mentioned that instruction of learner autonomy to TESL trainees was provided rather implicitly. It was mentioned that although concepts about learner autonomy were present in all themes, there was no direct instruction on how teachers could promote learner autonomy in learners. Alex, a TESL trainer said, *"I think learner autonomy... it's more like a theme throughout the course"* (interview, October 7, 2016). Anna, another TESL trainer, also reiterated the same thing, *"I would say that it's all in virtually everything all the modules. The term personalization comes up constantly, but I don't think we have a specific chapter or session on that through the course"* (interview, September 29, 2016). Having said this, however, it should not be concluded that this is necessarily the case at every TESL training course. Alicia said, *"I learned about it* [learner autonomy] *in TESL Ontario classes. They demonstrated how to teach without autonomy, and with autonomy, so we got to see the difference"* (interview, September 27, 2016). According to TESL trainers, TESL training programs should incorporate instruction of promoting learner autonomy. When asked if they felt

that inclusion of promoting learner autonomy in TESL courses would have a positive impact on learners' learning experience, the TESL trainers really welcomed the idea. Alex for example affirmed, *"Sure. A hundred percent. I believe the trend now in Canada is a little bit different from pure ESL. It's more a pathway to universities... and for the purposes of immigration…and learner autonomy is necessary for that. So in the Canadian context, I think TESL training programs will include that more and more"* (interview, October 7, 2016).

A thorough investigation of TESL trainers' and ESL learners' perceptions of learner autonomy led to the development certain themes including *definition, goal-setting, decision making, taking responsibility and Investment, individuality/personalization/independence, autonomous learner, awareness raising, documenting, PBLA,* and *development of perceptions.* A number of subthemes associated with some of these themes were also identified as discussed earlier. In the next section, an investigation of ESL learners' perceptions on the same topic is presented. I found it a worthwhile effort to compare learners' perceptions with those of TESL trainers and ESL instructors.

Perceptions about learner autonomy, ESL Learners. Having explored TESL trainers' and ESL instructors' views about learner autonomy, it would serve useful to learn ESL students' perceptions of promoting learner autonomy. I presumed that ESL learners would not necessarily be familiar with the technical terminology of learner autonomy. Even the word autonomy might have been confusing for learner participants. Therefore, to learn about their perceptions of learner autonomy, the interview questions were designed to inquire about their feelings about having the freedom to make decisions about their learning, taking charge of their learning, goal-setting, self-assessment, monitoring their progress, how their teachers performed in classroom,

what level of control teachers exerted, what strategies were used and, etc. Certain themes and subthemes were identified which corresponded with those that emerged in the interviews with TESL trainers and ESL instructors. It should be noted that the students' responses were also affected by whether they were in government-funded ESL programs where they were exposed to PBLA or whether they studied at private ESL schools across Ontario.

Freedom, decision-making, taking responsibility**.** Learners had mixed feelings with regards to how autonomous they felt during course instruction. Even the learners who were instructed in the PBLA context did not feel as if they were fully in charge. Almost all of the learners, however, said that they would have liked to have more autonomy and more independence. One of the recurring patterns was that of a comparison between the contexts. Most of the students said that they felt they had more freedom and more autonomy in Ontario's ESL context compared to their home country. Note should be taken however that the fact that the Canadian ESL context was relatively more autonomy-inspiring than the learners EFL/ESL contexts according to the learners does not necessarily mean that the ESL context in Ontario successfully fosters learner autonomy. According to the learners who made such comparisons, the EFL/ESL contexts in their countries were extremely teacher-centered. This, as I just stated would not, therefore serve as a reliable yardstick to find out if the teachers in Ontario's ESL context do in fact successfully promote learner autonomy in classrooms. What these learners shared was their positive attitude towards the promotion of learner autonomy in general. To find out to what extent the ESL teachers tried to promote learner autonomy in their classroom, I conducted semi-structured interviews with ESL learners to elicit responses.

When asked if they had developed autonomy in learning, the students came up with different responses as expected; however, they did not feel as if they were fully in charge of their learning. For example, David, an ESL student from ESL school 1, felt that he had no control either over the content or the method of learning English. He said there was a certain approach in the class and that he had to follow teachers' instructions. Although acknowledging that the context was more learner-centered compared to his own country, he said there were certain rubrics and instructions he had to follow. Eric, an ESL student from ESL school 2, also said that his ESL class offered little autonomy. He wished there had been more learner autonomy in the class. He said, *"We are adults and we can make decisions about our learning. Actually making decisions is the first step in life"* (interview, Oct 10, 2016). An interesting point in Eric's statement regarding learner autonomy was that he described decision-making as an important step in life. Learner autonomy in the literature has been described to be a necessary skill for lifelong learning.

The other interviews also showed that the learners would welcome more autonomy in their ESL classrooms. Even the learners who were instructed according to PBLA believed that they should have had more control over their own learning. In the case of the PBLA learners, they said that even though needs assessments were carried out, their goals and objectives were not always realized or pursued.

Alan from China said that he was under a lot of pressure because he had to follow the teacher's instructions and that he felt stressed. He said that he would have been much less stressed had the teacher allowed him to study in his own way. Some other learners also complained about not being able to try to learn certain items their own way. Alan and Nathan,

for instance, complained about the teacher dictating to them how to take notes. They said that they had to follow the teacher's instructions and that they did not have a choice. Nathan, an ESL student from ESL school 1, said, *"I don't understand why I was not given the choice to take notes the way I wanted to. I didn't find her* [teacher's] *way useful"* (interview, Oct 11, 2016).

Ali, an ESL student from ESL school 1, on the other hand, was quite happy about the level of independence he had in his ESL classroom. Coming from a teacher-centered background, he was really excited about the level of autonomy he was allowed in the classroom. He mentioned that they had sessions for independent study that he enjoyed a lot along with regular weekly sessions for counseling where he had the chance to speak with the teacher about his problems or his goals. Ali said that he really enjoyed being autonomous because he had come to the realization that the teachers could not make him study, but could motivate him to study on his own and that real learning took place, when he studied on his own.

Combining TESL trainers' and ESL teachers' perceptions about learner autonomy with learners' responses about how much autonomy the learners had been granted, it was deduced that even though most of the teachers had a positive view about learner autonomy in general, the majority of learners did not feel very autonomous even in PBLA classes.

The following sections shed more light on the issue in relation to the research questions as well as emerging themes and responses.

Goal-setting**.** With regards to goal setting, two out of three PBLA students said they were encouraged to set short-term/long-term goals, while only one out of five non-PBLA students said he was encouraged to do goal setting. The finding reveals the sharp contrast between the two

contexts vis-à-vis goal-setting. Almost everyone welcomed the idea of goal setting. In fact, only one learner out of nine was not sure if goal-setting would have been beneficial. Flora from China who admittedly came from a very traditional teacher-centered classroom background said, *"I would like to follow the teacher's instructions because I don't know what to do or what to learn"* (interview, Oct 12, 2016). Coming from a teacher-centered background, Flora did not feel confident enough to make decisions about her learning. This is tied with the self-efficacy theory and once again reveals the importance of teacher's role in promoting learner autonomy in learners by raising awareness among them. Other learners, however, had a positive attitude towards learner autonomy. David said, *"when I wrote short-term goals and long-term goals, it was very helpful to remember my goals and it (was) very helpful to encourage my learning"* (interview, Oct 13, 2016). Mahmoud, an ESL student in LINC Center 1, said that he really liked the idea because he could then follow what he liked to do. Drawing on his own example he said that he wanted to learn English to be able to find a job and that his teacher followed up with him and he enrolled in an Enhanced Language Training class to further improve his soft skills to that end. Joana, an ESL student from LINC Center 2, who pointed that her teacher did not encourage them to set goals said,

"*We didn't have any goal setting in the class. I think it could have been very useful. I remember that we had a supply teacher for two or three days. He came and mentioned this method. He wrote our names on the right board. Everyone wrote their name plus what they wanted to learn that day, and what they* [had] *achieved at the end of the day. I found this method very useful, but this was not done in our class. Our teacher refused all this because I think she was an old woman and she didn't want to try something new. Even though we told her that we liked that way, she was very dominant and refused our request*` (interview, Oct 14, 2016).

In the classes where goal-setting was practiced, the implementation in some cases widely varied. According to the students in some of the classes, the goal-setting was carried out in the so-called supportive or counseling sessions held regularly. These sessions were mandatory or optional depending on the language school policies. Students in these sessions discussed learning issues and problems with the teachers. They could also talk about their short-term and long-term objectives. In some cases, the teachers regarded this information as confidential, and therefore did not encourage the learners to share their goals with other learners. In contrast, in some other language schools like those in the PBLA context, teachers not only encouraged, but required the learners to mention their goals and objectives. The learners had to mention the purpose of their learning and the teacher then would supposedly tailor tasks and tests based on those goals. However in many situations, this was not feasible. As one of the teachers in PBLA explained that there were sometimes up to 28 students in a class. She continued by saying that it was not possible to address all of the needs of the students, so they had to put the students in different groups. The students then were encouraged to discuss the topics to be taught and then the majority won. Needless to say, the minority would feel as if their voices had not been heard. In some other classes, the problem was that goal setting was discussed but there were simply no follow-ups. The teacher introduced goal-setting to the students and might have even encouraged them to set their goals but then it was business as usual. Even though there could be some benefits with the goal-setting only, it could be much more fruitful if the teachers followed up with the learners about their goals and provided them with the necessary scaffolding.

Awareness-raising**.** When asked about awareness raising, the responses of the learners suggested that there was a need for improvement. One of the interview questions asked the learners if their teacher discussed different learning strategies and which strategy would benefit

the learners, only three out of nine learners said they recalled such discussions. Introducing various learning strategies, encouraging learners to reflect on different strategies and to decide which strategy would benefit them individually would certainly help with learner involvement which is a major principle of learner autonomy. Having such metacognition would serve learners with regards to their self-efficacy beliefs and their competence in decision-making about their learning. Two of the learners who responded positively David and Nathan said that these ideas were discussed in the regular weekly counseling sessions. The practice, however, was not necessarily a norm in other ESL schools. The approach did not seem to be systemic as there was quite a range from non-practice to the one-on-one counseling sessions in different ESL schools across Ontario. In some classes according to some participants, the students were required to use the strategies introduced by the teacher and in other classes such as that of David's, the learners were advised about different strategies to improve their language skills in one-on-one regular counseling sessions. Sharing ideas in class about learning strategies whether in groups or pairs was something which did not surface in any of the interviews with the ESL learners. As a means of encouraging learners to make decisions about their learning and to get them involved in their language learning experience, ESL teachers can encourage learners to discuss different learning strategies that benefit them. Such a practice would enhance learners' understanding of the mechanisms involved in learning and get them involved in their learning process.

Providing counseling with regards to the online resources, however, the ESL teachers seemed to be doing a much better job according to the learners. All learners interviewed, save for one said that their teachers encouraged them to make use of online resources. Online resources have proved to be a worthy replacement for the traditional self-access centers in the early autonomy-inspiring classrooms. For example, Eric said that online resources not only provided

him with many opportunities, but also enabled him to continue learning outside the classroom. He was very thankful to his teacher for introducing useful websites. The feeling reverberated in other interviews as well. In some sites including that of Ali's and Nathan's, there were certain sessions allocated to independent online research and study. Some other students were encouraged to form online groups and share their work with their peers.

Documenting**.** Regarding documenting their language learning experience via a language learning journal, diary, portfolio or binder, there was a sharp contrast between the learners who studied in PBLA context and those in other adult ESL contexts. The learners who studied in the PBLA context were not only encouraged, but required to have a binder, the Language Companion, in which they documented their learning experience and their goals along with other sections. The learners were expected to bring the binder to the class every day. The binder would further include tasks and tests that the learners had to complete.

As mentioned above, all of the learners who were in the PBLA context had to have a portfolio known as Language Companion to document their learning experience. In contrast, none of the learners in other adult ESL contexts including colleges or ESL institutes were encouraged to keep a portfolio. In fact, the interviews revealed that the participants in this group of learners were not even familiar with the concept. There were, however, in some cases occasional recording of the learning experience through specific means. For example, David said his teacher encouraged them to have a vocabulary tracker where they would keep a record of their vocabulary building. Ali, another ESL student, said that his teacher encouraged the students to write reflections about their assignments, but these examples were quite different from comprehensive language portfolios like European language portfolio or portfolio based language

assessment (PBLA) binder, the Language Companion. The learners who had the Language Companion, the binder designed in the PBLA system, had very mixed feelings about it. Selena had many problems with the way Language Companion was designed. She found it an unnecessary burden both for the teachers and the learners describing it as a waste of time. She said the binder was very *"time-consuming"* and *"not meaningful"* (interview, October 25, 2016). Selena described the binder as something mandatory that the majority of the students were reluctant to maintain. Her comments in fact resonated with some other learners who did not find the binder very useful or practical. Other opponents of the binder found it *"confusing"*, *"not practical"*, *"not helpful"*, etc. These comments were in line with comments made on PBLA welcomed documenting their learning in a portfolio, but not the way the Language Companion was designed. Selena, for example, said that she would like to have a learning journal because:

"It keeps you organized. For your learning experience and also for teachers. They can easily know what your history is. Maybe your weaknesses and maybe they can help you get better. Also for Learners who can't set the goals for learning English, the learning journal helps set goals and then follow the directions. I think that's necessary" (interview, October 25, 2016).

Based on her comments, Selena would have found a learning journal useful. But, she was not satisfied with the way PBLA was designed. She said, *"I believe the person who set up PBLA had the idea maybe of making a learning journal, but currently they do the opposite way"* (Interview, Selena). Mahmoud and Joana, on the other hand, were in favor of the Language Companion mainly because it helped them be more organized. Joana further said the binder helped her to monitor her progress. Interestingly, these advantages were those emphasized by Selena. Nonetheless, based on the interviews it could be argued that most of the learners believed

that the advantages of Language Companion binder designed according to PBLA were outweighed by its disadvantages. This, however, should not be construed as a position against language portfolios in general. The findings were pertinent to PBLA designed portfolio, the Language Companion. As mentioned by most of the ESL learner participants, a well-developed language portfolio could prove to be very useful.

In the next section, I address my second research question.

Research Question 2 Results

Research Question 2

To what extent, according to the teacher educators, teachers and learners in Ontario's ESL context does the promotion of learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?

Contribution to L2 learning.

"If a learner catches onto this idea that they are responsible for their own learning and if they are really interested in getting into this job and fitting into this culture and whatever their motivation is, they really like that. It's very motivating for them" (Emma, interview, October 19, 2016).

"With them having autonomy, it allows them to succeed, helps them to realize that they can achieve going to the next level. They can find a job, they can get a better education, they can do something in Canada" (Sylvie, interview, September 23, 2016).

"*As a result of promoting learner autonomy, the students try harder and take it more seriously. They will be less bored*" (Alicia, interview, September 27, 2016).

"*I think for the student, it's motivating. Helping them to set realistic achievable small goals can be very motivating because it's like you set a goal and you meet your goal. So, it feels like you are successful. I feel helping students to feel successful furthers their motivation. I think that that's fantastic"* (Emily, interview, September 26, 2016).

"*I think the promotion of learner autonomy makes a huge contribution because the amount of face time we have with the students is limited. I think at the end of the day, it's essential that the students take some responsibility. It's important that the students take what they learn here every day and integrate and incorporate it in their own meaningful way. To have true lasting fluent L2 language learning ability I think autonomy has to be there"* (Anna, interview, September 29, 2016).

When asked whether the promotion of learner autonomy contributed to L2 learning experience, the majority of the participants believed that it had a significantly positive impact on learners. In fact, there was only one participant who believed there was not a positive correlation. This one participant was an ESL instructor who had to teach according to PBLA as she taught at a LINC center, but felt very negative about PBLA. Her antipathy toward learner autonomy was admittedly deeply rooted in her negativity toward PBLA because as she mentioned earlier based on her training, she equated PBLA with learner autonomy. In response to the question about the contribution of the promotion of learner autonomy to L2 learning, she said that she was not sure if one needed to be autonomous to be a successful learner. The veracity and validity of this statement aside, it should be noted that such a statement does not refute the positive impact of the promotion of learner autonomy on learners' language learning experience. Six other participants strongly believed that the promotion of learner autonomy had a positive contribution to L2

learning experience and two participants, though a bit speculative, were inclined towards the contribution being positive. On the whole, ESL teachers and TESL trainers believed that the promotion of learner autonomy would have a positive and significant impact on L2 learning experience. Certain sub-themes emerged as participants shared their views with the most frequent ones being *motivation, investment, student empowerment, real-life relevance, needs-based teaching/learning*. Most of the participants suggested that the promotion of learner autonomy could be very motivating because learners would feel that they had a say in their learning. Consequently, learners would feel like shareholders in their learning experience. This would make them conscious about their investment in their language learning experience. Learners would feel empowered and in Alicia's words, not only would the learners feel more motivated, they would become more industrious. Alicia added that learners also would enjoy their learning further because they would see that they would be learning in accordance with their needs and objectives that they had expressed in the needs assessment process and this would further motivate them in their learning. Emily also echoed Alicia's comments highlighting motivation as a positive outcome of promoting learner autonomy arising from a sense of achievement derived from setting and materializing goals. Emily cautioned, however, that the teacher had to provide proper scaffolding and counseling, because otherwise as she warned it could be very demotivating if unrealistic goals were set and the students failed to achieve those goals. Such circumstances, Emily said, would lead to frustration, disappointment, and demotivation. She stated, *"When they don't achieve those goals, they get very demotivated and then they are kind of like: to hell with goals, you just teach me. Why are you asking me to do this?"* (interview, September 26, 2016).

According to the participants, another positive contribution to learning, based on learner autonomy, was that learning was based on authentic language and had real-world relevance. Autonomy-inspiring instruction, the participants pointed out, was based on real-life tasks and once learners realized that this helped them interact and communicate with the target language speakers they were further motivated.

Due to the real-life relevance and authentic nature of the tasks designed to foster learner autonomy, the development of autonomy in learners would not only help them with their language learning experience, but give them the confidence to prosper in life as they come to the understanding that they can communicate with speakers of the target language outside the classroom.

Another interesting sub-theme surfacing was that the promotion of learner autonomy contributed to L2 learning by providing learning opportunities outside the classroom. It was frequently mentioned during the interviews that learners' presence in the classrooms were limited timewise especially in large classrooms. A major contribution of promoting learner autonomy according to some of the participants including Ana was that it would encourage learners not to be confined to the classroom only but to proceed with their learning outside the boundaries of the class.

Anna said that although attending the classes can be very useful, learners learn much more when they are encouraged to take charge of their own learning and "*integrate and incorporate it in their own meaningful way".* Kelley, another ESL instructor, mentioned the same thing in her own way, "*So I think if you teach and only rely on what happens in the classroom, then it won't be that efficient. I think to learn, students should take some kind of*

responsibility to continue the process because every student has different kind of abilities and different kind of skills" (interview, October 10, 2016).

Even the two participants who were a bit skeptical for different reasons had overall a positive viewpoint vis-à-vis the contribution of promoting learner autonomy to L2 learning. Adrienne, for instance, said, *"It depends on the students. For some, they have to have you tell them what to do. Some students are afraid of making these decisions on their own. Maybe, it's because of past experiences, but although it's not so clear-cut, for the student… yes…I think overall it's a very good thing to increase their autonomy"* (interview, October 5, 2016).

Alex, a TESL trainer, related the contribution to the context saying that it had become even more important in the Canadian context, because as he suggested the ESL context in Ontario was shifting from pure ESL to a gateway to higher education, and the promotion of learner autonomy as a lifelong learning skill would prove very useful in that regard.

In general, most of the participants, TESL trainers and ESL instructors, believed that the promotion of learner autonomy would have a positive contribution to L2 learning experience as it would further learners' motivation, empower them by giving them the choice, help them get involved in their learning experience through goal-setting and decision making and prepare them for lifelong learning.

Research Question 3 Results

Research Question 3

How desirable and feasible do teacher educators, teachers and learners in Ontario's ESL context feel it is to promote learner autonomy?

Desirability. With regards to the desirability of the promotion of learner autonomy, almost every participant found it very desirable with the exception of two ESL instructors, Emily and Sarah, who found it conditional. Emily said it would be very desirable if teachers and learners were provided with the right material. As discussed earlier, many of the ESL teachers felt that with regards to PBLA, proper teaching material had not been developed and teachers did not have either the time or resources or in some cases probably the capability to develop material for their learners. Sarah also found it desirable but described time limitations as a major hurdle saying, *"It's excellent if we had the time, but honestly as a teacher, I really feel like now I am driven to obtain artifacts. It does take time, and unfortunately, that's something I don't have any more"* (interview, Oct 3, 2016). Apart from these two, all other participants said they found it very desirable with the most recurring subtheme emerging as independence. Sylvie felt it was very desirable because of the level of control and independence it offered the learners. She said the learners were not robots, and they enjoyed having a certain level of freedom and control over their learning. She remarked, *"The more control they* [learners] *have of their learning, the more they'll enjoy the class. When they are in control and know what they want to learn, it will benefit them and the class will be more enjoyable"* (interview, September 23, 2016). Emily also appreciated offering learners the choice suggesting that it may develop creativity in learners. She said, "*I think getting creative about how you achieve your goals in other ways is good. They can feel more free to experience in their own independent pursuits"* (interview, September 26, 2016). To illustrate this, Emily described the case of one of her students who had a unique style of being *"rhythmical and musical"* and through appropriate scaffolding, he took advantage of this feature to facilitate learning in his own unique way to his benefit. Emma, described the transition of responsibility from the teachers to the learners as very positive and desirable saying, "*I like it*

because it takes the responsibility off of my shoulders and the students say: Oh, this means that I have to do something. So, I love it. Personally, I think it's important for them" (interview, October 19, 2016). Emma, then adds that her remark should not be interpreted in a way as if she were being lazy, but rather because the students would be encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. Alex not only found it desirable, but emphasized on the need for the promotion of learner autonomy. He said, "*I definitely see the need. It's definitely something that I want to do as a TESL trainer"* (interview, Oct 7, 2016).

With reference to the participants' remarks about the promotion of learner autonomy, it can be concluded that a strong majority of the participants of all groups of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners found it desirable. Even the few ESL instructors who had reservations because of certain feasibility issues including time, material, cultural issues and class size, found it desirable if those issues were resolved. There were, however, salient feasibility issues and challenges that could adversely affect the (perceptions about) the promotion of learner autonomy in ESL classrooms. In the next section, I will discuss these issues.

Feasibility. On the question of feasibility, the ESL instructors and even TESL trainers had certain reservations. This was while the same participants were very positive about the desirability of promoting learner autonomy. In many cases the responses were conditional. The reservations TESL trainers and ESL instructors had were mainly rooted in the challenges toward the promotion of learner autonomy. On the feasibility of the promotion of learner autonomy, although the majority were positive, almost none of the participants' responses was definitive. All of the responses came with conditions attached based on the challenges they either experienced or thought they would experience in promoting learner autonomy. Even Emma, who

was a PBLA trainer, said that although doable, *"for those who have no literacy whatsoever… for them it's a slow start. So, feasibility for them, yeah it's difficult"* (interview, October 19, 2016). On a positive note, however, only one participant, Sarah, said it was not very feasible. The majority of participants said it was feasible but there were challenges which needed to be tackled. Therefore, to have a better understanding of the discrepancy between the participants' perception of desirability and feasibility of promoting learner autonomy it is important to explore challenges as suggested by participants elaborated on below.

Research Question 4 Results

Research Question 4

What challenges do teachers in Ontario's ESL context face in helping their learners become more autonomous?

Challenges. According to participants' responses, several themes were identified as challenges in the promotion of learner autonomy. The themes identified were divided into two groups of organizational and individual barriers each with sub-themes. In terms of organizational challenges, the following sub-themes were identified: *time, class size, requirements, material, school policies*, and *resources*. The individual challenges included the following sub-themes: *learner resistance, self-efficacy beliefs* and *cultural differences*.

Organizational barriers.

Time.

"Time limitations for sure. Tasks are kind of restrictive. We only have three months. There are certain expectations. We have to teach, but we also have to teach what they [the

learners] *want. We also have to practice for tasks. The time crunch is hard, and we also have to spend more time because they didn't get it"* (Alicia, interview, September 27, 2016).

"It's very time-consuming. If in a perfect world I had an ideal number of students and the ideal amount of time, it would be feasible, but now it puts a lot of pressure on teachers to cut corners. It's just that simple" (Sarah, interview, October 3, 2016).

"*The first challenge I think would be time and at many schools that is something they don't have"* (Alex, interview, October 7, 2016).

"*It does take more effort on the part of the teacher and it can definitely be more time-consuming, but I think it's far more rewarding because it promotes autonomy"* (Anna, interview, September 29, 2016).

Promoting learner autonomy with learner-centeredness among the core concepts, many participants argued, demands a lot of time from both teachers and learners. Learner engagement and learner involvement require not only considerable time allocation, but excellent time management skills. Language schools and ESL programs have certain time limitations within which courses should be completed. When asked about the challenges they had to face, *time* surfaced as one of the most recurring themes especially with the ESL instructors who taught according to the PBLA model. There was a lot to achieve and there were always time limitations. The situation was further compounded by the fact that many students were not quite familiar with a model of teaching aimed at promoting learner autonomy, especially if it required the learners to use a language portfolio, like the Language Companion binder of PBLA.

Class size.

"From a teacher's perspective when you've got 20 people with such a variance and goals, it can be difficult to help students stay motivated to achieve their goals. I think to really work effectively, classrooms really need to be 10 students per teacher and I think that's the only way that it can be very effective" (Sarah, interview, October 3, 2016).

"I think PBLA was made for about 10 students because you can keep track of 10 students. I have over 28 in the morning, and 28 in the afternoon, so to feasibly do this is very difficult. It's very difficult to keep track of 28 people, with 28 very different learning styles, learning paths, and learning abilities. Feasibly I would say it's impossible with 28 people, however, I do it, I don't do it as well as I could if I had 10" (Adrienne, interview, October 5, 2016).

Another issue which surfaced in conjunction with time limitations was class size. Many ESL classes especially those in the government-funded ESL programs contained more than twenty students and this, according to the participants, could be a huge challenge with regards to the promotion of learner autonomy. Teachers needed to spend a lot of time with each individual to provide them with the necessary counseling and scaffolding from needs assessment to progress check, etc. and such large classes with the time limitations made it very difficult for the teachers to manage. Alex who taught TESOL courses at different ESL schools across Ontario said he knew many schools that had about 25 or 30 students which meant "*the teachers didn't get to have a lot of face time with the students"* (interview, October 7, 2016).

Material.

"It would be feasible if the government provided a national sort of set of materials that the students could use, and it [the government] *would standardize the material in a way that you,*

the students and the teachers, had very clear instructions on how this functions...I think it would be feasible" (Emily, interview, September 26, 2016).

One of the major challenges with the promotion of learner autonomy, according to the participants, was with the material. During the interviews with ESL instructors especially those who taught according to PBLA, teachers were very unsatisfied with the dearth of standardized resources to be used in their classroom. Emily said expecting teachers to provide all the classroom materials including tasks and tests, negatively affected the feasibility of promoting learner autonomy. According to Emily, not all the teachers had the time or were qualified to develop material that would help promote learner autonomy. She called for the government to develop standardized material that would make it feasible. The same concept was echoed in the remarks made by other participants who voiced concerns about different interpretations among teachers for instance about what constituted a real life task to be used as a PBLA test or teachers' different interpretations of Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) for developing such material.

Requirements**.** Courses built on the promotion of learner autonomy may have very demanding requirements both for teachers and learners. In the PBLA model of instruction, for instance, almost all of the ESL instructors, except Emma who was a PBLA trainer, made complaints that given the time limits, the tasks and tests required were overwhelming. Emily described the amount of work as "*a nightmare"*, especially for new ESL teachers. Sylvie echoed the same concept saying *"We have to have 32 artifacts to prove by the end of the term. And if we don't have that the students will get furious, because they can't advance"* (interview, September 23, 2016). Sarah said that the PBLA model of instruction aimed at developing learner autonomy was extremely demanding as it expected teachers to design, teach and test certain real life tasks, aka "artifacts" in a very limited amount of time. According to Sarah, this would strain teachers

and affect their performance. Teachers, according to Sarah, were required by the LINC Center where they taught to make learners keep these "artifacts" in their binders. By the end of the term, teachers were also expected to have all the artifacts assessed. Sarah noted teachers always had to look for PBLA artifacts and this made it seem more like an achievement for the teacher than the students in the sense that teachers worked hard just to maintain the tasks and tests. She said in a sarcastic manner, *"So people* [teachers] *are constantly looking for opportunities to turn everything into artifacts. And it feels sort of like achievements on video games you know…like you wanna know how many artifacts you can collect, instead of achievements that the students can collect, and I think that teaching kind of falls to the wayside. It becomes an afterthought"* (interview, October 3, 2016).

School policies**.** With regards to the challenges, one of the important emerging themes was school policies and regulations. Sylvie who taught at two different schools compared her morning school with the evening school saying that she felt much more comfortable with the morning school to perform real life activities aimed at promoting learner autonomy because of the flexibility of the school policies. She mentioned examples of certain activities per requests of her students e.g. ordering food at a restaurant or going to the railway station to ask for information. Some language schools had flexible policies, while some others were rigid with their policies which made the promotion of learner autonomy more challenging. Alicia mentioned the same thing as a restriction in her school saying that while she and her students liked to practice some real life tasks, for instance, speaking to a hairdresser, they were not allowed to hold sessions outside the classroom in a real-life context. Therefore, they would have to "pretend" as a strategy to deal with the limitation. Ironically, though aiming at promoting learner autonomy, PBLA itself as a regulation dictated by certain schools, proved as a barrier in

allowing certain materials to be taught in certain ways even if this were something that teachers or learners desired as was the case with explicit instruction of grammar.

Individual barriers.

Learner resistance/reluctance.

"I see a tremendous level of resistance because it's just very unfamiliar. It's a very different style. It does seem like they are frustrated and they seem to be craving a direct lesson. It's kind of hard for me to say that there are some students that are really keen on this [learner autonomy]*"* (Sarah, interview, October 3, 2016).

"The problem is some students would not feel happy about taking charge of their own learning. They expect the teacher to tell them everything. There could be a lot of miscommunication about learner autonomy" (Alex, interview, October 7, 2016).

A major theme emerging from the interviews with the participants was learner resistance/reluctance towards learner autonomy. According to the participants, some learners were not very welcoming to the concept of learner autonomy. Some found it chaotic and expected teachers to teach. This, according to the participants, could be due to the students' background coming from a traditional teacher-centered classroom where education was identified by the traditional power-relationship in a classroom where the teacher was the authority figure and the learners were the subjects to which knowledge would be imparted.

Self-efficacy beliefs.

"It can be motivating but they can get stressed... like there's a tension between motivation and fear. So, they are fearful of setting goals because they're like I am not gonna be able to do it, and then I am gonna judge myself hard" (Emily, interview, September 26, 2016).

Another individual barrier, many participants pointed to, was self-efficacy beliefs. Accordingly, some learners did not find themselves capable, knowledgeable, or qualified enough to make decisions about their learning. According to Sarah, some students believed, "*you don't know what you don't know"* (interview, October 3, 2016). This was indeed confirmed by a number of ESL students.

Learner investment differences.

"Not everyone has the same needs. This grandma doesn't have the same investment as that university student. But I have to teach them both. So, it's like juggling, getting students to do other things while I am just doing the task with this one person, so yeah, those things are difficult" (Alicia, interview, September 27, 2016).

"A very big challenge is selling the idea to the students themselves that this is valuable... you know... when the students get 5 out of 10 on their vocabulary test they want to know the vocabulary. They don't care about learner autonomy. They would say I'll learn about that later and that echoes to parents and other learners" (Alex, interview, October 7, 2016).

Among the challenges in promoting learner autonomy, many participants pointed to learners with different investments in their language learning experience. Learners could vary widely with regards to their goals and needs. Language instruction should be tailored with regards to the needs of each individual learners, and in a class with such variance of students, addressing the needs of the learners and incorporating them into the instruction is quite a challenge. This concern was raised by participants especially when it came to large class sizes. Although participants acknowledged that the promotion of learner autonomy would have positive contributions to the learners' language learning experience, most of the ESL teachers said feasibility would be limited in large classrooms as discussed earlier in the class size section.

On the issue of investment, Alex described it as a challenge for teachers to convince learners with certain agendas of the usefulness of being autonomous.

Alex further pointed that selling the idea would also entail getting teachers on board along with the learners and everybody involved including the parents in the case of younger ESL learners. This, he said, was of utmost importance especially to private schools and institutes because, *"we have paying customers and we have to keep them happy"* (interview, October 7, 2016).

Cultural differences.

"Cultural difference is a major challenge. I do have Chinese, Korean, and Japanese students for sure, even the middle-eastern students who want that authority figure teacher. They want to be told what to do, and when you don't tell them what to do they get upset. So you really have to balance that because they are paying customers here" (Alex, interview, October 7, 2016).

"I think a lot of cultures expect that institutional kind of education experience. They want direct instruction. I find that to be quite a challenge with newcomers because again I feel sometimes there's such a tremendous variance, again with it being multicultural" (Sarah, interview, October 3, 2016).

"So, a little while ago I read this interesting text about learner autonomy saying that students should be in charge of their own learning, but when I asked my students who do you think is responsible for your learning, the majority of the students said you are the teacher, so you are responsible for our learning" (Kelley, interview, October 10, 2016).

As mentioned in the literature review of this study, cultural background of individuals affect their perceptions of learner autonomy and the degree to which they would welcome the

idea. The analysis of the findings of this research also supported this as cultural differences emerged as an important determinant of the learners' willingness to embrace learner autonomy. The learners' cultural differences were described by most of the participants as a double-edged sword vis-a-vis (the promotion of) language learner autonomy as in some cultures it was regarded as chaos. Many of the participants from all the three groups of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL students confirmed this to be true. Comparing different cultures, Alex said he thought the students in Canada, those who grew up in the Canadian education environment, were more open to the idea.

Interestingly, Kelley played the same note saying that the students who came to the Canadian ESL context were mostly immigrants or international students from different cultures many of which were not initially welcoming of the idea.

The same issue was raised in a similar way with other participants describing it as a challenge when someone comes from a background which used to more of the traditional teacher-centered style.

In the previous section questions of desirability, feasibility and challenges in promoting learner autonomy were discussed. In the following section, I will discuss what roles according to the participants, teachers played with regards to the promotion of learner autonomy in their classrooms.

Research Question 5 Results

Research Question 5

What roles according to language learners in Ontario's ESL context do teachers assume in ESL classrooms with regards to the development of language learner autonomy?

Teachers' roles. A very important theme in participants' perceptions on the promotion of learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context was that of teachers' roles in an autonomy-inspiring context in contrast with that of a more traditional teacher-centered classroom where the teacher is the authority figure. A thorough analysis of the participants' views led to the emergence of certain recurring themes. The most frequent themes were: *Facilitator, Motivator,* and *Counselor*. With regards to the roles assumed by teachers, it should be noted that teachers who taught according to PBLA, i.e. in government-funded ESL programs LINC, more or less followed the same strategies and assumed similar roles. This included the teachers who did not feel very positive about PBLA as well. Irrespective of their feelings, they performed according to the principles of PBLA as they were required by their language school. Almost all of the participants, TESL trainers and ESL instructors were clear about the differences between roles assumed by teachers in an autonomy-inspiring classroom and teachers at other contexts. All of the ESL teachers both PBLA and non-PBLA felt they promoted learner autonomy in their classroom. As mentioned earlier, the performance of the ESL teachers who taught according to PBLA was more systemic as they were required to observe certain principles in their classrooms. None of the participants felt as if their role as an ESL teacher was diminished through empowering of the students by fostering learner autonomy. Although the majority of PBLA teachers had problems with how PBLA was designed and applied, they were positive about (the promotion of) learner autonomy. Below I will present some of the views on the most frequent themes emerging as teachers' roles in an autonomy-inspiring classroom.

***Facilitator*.** Facilitator was the most frequent theme. Sylvie said, *"I think new roles would be a facilitator, more than a teacher"* (interview, September 23, 2016). She continued by saying, "*to me teaching is not just the teacher standing in the front and saying you have to do this and that. I don't jump in to teach. I let them* [learners] *figure out the answer on their own"* (interview, September 23, 2016). Alicia said that as a facilitator, she encouraged learners to develop conversations on their own. Alex also emphasized on facilitator as a role and said, "*In an environment where the teacher tries to promote learner autonomy, you're not the teacher so much anymore. You're more of a facilitator. You're providing materials… providing the environment, but letting the students direct where things go...more like greasing the wheel but letting the students go"* (interview, October 7, 2016). All participants pointed to the importance of granting autonomy to the learners and acting as a facilitator in the transition while distancing from direct instruction. Sarah described herself as a *"coach"* and said, "*I have never thought of myself as the authority in the classroom. I always introduce myself as a language coach. They kind of teach themselves English. I am sort of here to iron out the wrinkles and to keep them on track"* (interview, October 3, 2016). Anna had a very interesting interpretation. She remarked, "*The classic terms were facilitator, manager, and coach. More and more though, I'm liking the term co-learner. The teacher is kind of interacting with the students and engaging with the material as much as the students are"* (interview, September 29, 2016). She further emphasized to promote learner autonomy teachers had to recognize the value of questions instead of answers. Speaking about the strategies that could help promote learner autonomy in the classroom Anna said, "*The biggest one is asking instead of telling. Trying to encourage collaboration... the value of questions instead of answers. I think that's important to have a variety to give the students the*

opportunity to do solo work. Autonomy largely is going to be coming from some independent work and the teacher can facilitate this" (interview, September 29, 2016).

While discussing the facilitator role of the teacher, on several occasions, the participants discussed the actual set-up of the classroom with regards to the teacher not being the authority figure teaching remotely at the front. Sarah, for instance, said, "*I am constantly with my students…actually at a table with my students. I think that's a new style for other teachers. I think some teachers teach remotely from a desk in front of the room, and basically remain there for much of the day"* (interview, October 3, 2016). Emma said, "*To me, when I hear the students talking and if someone walks into the room and asks where's the teacher? That's the kind of classroom I want"* (interview, October 19, 2016). Emily also echoed the same idea, saying, "*You just go around from table to table and give them a lesson and give them feedback on their performance. There is nobody in front of the classroom...like you are just constantly moving around"* (interview, September 26, 2016).

Exploring the views of the participants, it can be observed that the majority emphasized indirect teaching, encouraging the learners to try to learn on their own. Even the actual position of the teacher is affected. The teacher is no longer the Mr. /Mrs. Know-it-all, standing in front of the class the whole time, lecturing and imparting knowledge to his/her subjects.

***Motivator*.** The participants also highlighted *motivator* as an important role for the teacher who aims to promote learner autonomy. Speaking about the importance of motivating the learners Alicia said, *"I think the students who are not invested in themselves don't care. I really encourage them to do it on their own...they are going to be more successful"* (interview, September 27, 2016). Sylvie said that she really cared about what students wanted. It was important for her to see that her students were motivated and involved. She said, "*I always check*

their participation. If they participate, I know that they are enthusiastic. Otherwise, I will try to change the topic" (interview, September 23, 2016). Alex also said, "*Another important role is a motivator. You have to get them to understand why they're learning"* (interview, October 7, 2016). Motivating the learners to take responsibility for their learning helps with their investment in language learning. Other participants also confirmed this. Adrienne said, "*They* [the learners] *want to know. They want to learn, and you* [the teacher] *should encourage them to"* (interview, October 5, 2016). She continued by saying, *"I have always taught with this order of autonomous idea. Making the students aware that they are responsible for their learning"* (interview, October 5, 2016). In order to take responsibility for their learning, the learners need to be invested and motivated in their learning. Therefore, a teacher who tries to promote learner autonomy needs to build motivation in their learners.

***Counselor*.** Another recurring theme emerging in participants' views on teachers' roles in an autonomy-inspiring environment was that of counselor/study guide. A teacher aiming at promoting learner autonomy, the majority of participants said, needed to act as a counselor to discuss with the learners their learning experience. To provide them with the help they need to find their own way and motivate them to continue on their journey. Adrienne, for instance, highlighted the importance of providing counseling by encouraging the learners to take charge of their learning. She said, *"I come up with ideas of how they would learn. I mean we talk about learning styles and positive ways of learning and I encourage them to share their ideas with their peers"* (interview, October 5, 2016). As put by Emma, one of the differences between the teachers who try to promote learner autonomy and those who do not is more involvement in one-on-one interaction with the learner. As a teacher/counselor she said, the teacher should raise awareness in their learners about their learning and encourage them to take charge of their

learning, "*You* [the teacher] *should tell them* [the learners] *that from now you are responsible for the things that you need to know"* (interview, October 19, 2016). The teacher/counselor should help the learners develop their goals. Emma said, *"I like to have them* [learners] *think about where they want to go. I find that it kind of motivates them because it's kind of like brainstorming. We just talk about the idea to get everyone involved, so they are on task."* (interview, October 19, 2016). She then continued by saying that not only should the teachers always keep the learners' goals in mind, they should encourage their learners to return to their goals as well. The concept of the teachers encouraging and helping their learners with goal-setting was mentioned by most of the participants. Another important thing, many participants said, was to encourage the learners as a counselor to reflect on their learning and their performance, and then provide the learners with feedback. Sarah, for example, said, *"We use the reflective writing…reflective journals. Students generally like to… they do like to do the reflective writing I find. I help motivate them for that sort of weekly task, by making them maintain a daily calendar"* (interview, October 3, 2016). Other participants also mentioned reflection as an important thing that the teacher would require the students to have. The next step for the teachers/counselors, most of the participants said, was to provide the learners with the feedback as part of their assessment. On providing feedback, Anna, for example, said, "*Having feedback is very important. So, whatever the students have done independently, they are getting confirmation and evaluation after meeting with their partners or the groups, and then finally from the teachers"* (interview, September 29, 2016). Emily also talked about her classroom highlighting the importance of paying attention to each individual, counseling, and talking about their short term and long term goals. She said she encouraged learners to share ideas and goals with their peers. Learners with similar goals would ally together to pursue their goals. For

example, one group decided to learn how to apply for a job. They intended to improve their language proficiency in that area. The teacher would then design tasks and tests based on that content. Emily said she encouraged reflection and then she gave them feedback. She said, "*I give them each individualized comments about their performance"* (interview, September 26, 2016). This was also confirmed by ESL student participants. Some ESL programs according to the ESL learners, provisioned an independent study session where the students could have one-on-one counseling sessions with their teachers where they could talk about their goals, weaknesses and any other issue related to their language learning experience. That aside, according to PBLA, teachers were required to do a needs assessment with learners, help them set their goals and then tailor their instruction in an individualized manner, customized to the needs of those individuals. The content, the teaching, and the testing, according to PBLA, all needed to be in accordance with the goals set by the learners themselves by the aid of the teachers. This shaped the roles of the teachers and their perceptions of those roles.

ESL learners' perceptions of teachers' roles. During interviews with ESL learners, certain themes surfaced which corresponded with those mentioned by ESL instructors and those in the literature of learner autonomy. These themes included: facilitator, counselor, and motivator. The participants' responses of the learners were in certain cases affected by whether they studied in PBLA or non-PBLA contexts. In general, ESL learners had mixed feelings about how autonomous they felt throughout the program, but for the most part, the majority of the students felt they were not in charge of their learning. The majority of the learners said they found the teachers to have a nearly dominant role over the content and practices. None of the learners felt as if they were fully in charge of their learning. When asked if they believed they were encouraged to make decisions about their learning six out of nine had a negative response.

With regards to goal setting, two out of three PBLA students said they were encouraged to set short-term/long-term goals, while only one out of five non-PBLA students said he was encouraged to do goal setting. Goal-setting is an activity which is required in the PBLA system. In the very beginning of the program, the teacher is required to have the learners write down short-term/long-term goals in a needs assessment process. The goals are documented in the PBLA binder and the tasks designed by the teacher should be geared toward these goals. Throughout the interviews some learners also mentioned they received counseling from their teachers about their weaknesses, strengths, and also advice on learning strategies. Five learners out of nine said they had received counseling from their teacher in one way or another. These counselling sessions ranged from one-on-one counseling at regular supporting sessions to group activity in the classroom. Three out of nine said teachers introduced different learning strategies in the classroom. According to the participants, all of the teachers encouraged online resources. This is while, according to the ESL learners interviewed, none of the teachers encouraged self-assessment in class. Self-assessment is a very important element in the promotion of learner autonomy (Little, 2007). Also, except for PBLA students, none of the learners were encouraged to make use of a language portfolio. All of the PBLA students had to use the PBLA language portfolio, the Language Companion, in their class. These observations were apart from the regular teaching/learning activities and assignments performed during instruction. According to learners' perceptions, teachers in the ESL context in Ontario assumed a variety of roles attributable to those in the literature of learner autonomy. These roles, however, as evidenced by the data elicited from the participants varied in the context.

Context. When discussing the ESL context in Ontario and if it had in recent years considerably changed with regards to the promotion of learner autonomy there was a sharp

contrast between those involved in the PBLA model of teaching and those in the non-PBLA ESL schools.

***PBLA*.** The participants involved with PBLA spoke of significant changes in the system. As discussed earlier, there were mixed feelings about the application of PBLA. Regardless, according to the participants, the changes were quite drastic. Based on the comments of the participants, the changes were mainly in two major categories of structure and content. One of the main differences that most of the participants pointed to was the move from unstructured instruction with relatively little supervision to the very structured model of PBLA and its binder, the Language Companion. Alicia said, *"There didn't seem to be an overall expectation of exactly what to teach. It was sort of up to the teacher before"* (interview, September 27, 2016). Adrienne pointed to the same issue saying, *"It was a bit unstructured. There was no oversight, no trying to make it richer"* (interview, October 5, 2016). Although, Adrienne believed the changes introduced by PBLA meant extra work for the teachers. Some teachers, she said, were not happy with the changes, *"There's been a lot of pushback from the PBLA instructors. The pushback is not because of the actual PBLA. It's because it's gonna cost you a lot more extra work"* (interview, October 5, 2016). The major problem, as discussed in the PBLA section earlier, was that PBLA required the teachers to spend a lot of time developing material for the classroom and also a significant amount of time for the organization of the paperwork including that of the binder, Language Companion. Apart from PBLA itself, the participants welcomed the change toward the promotion of learner autonomy. Sarah, who was very negative about the application of PBLA said, *"I see a big difference when I step out of our school into an ESL school. That's when I sort of think this is very different. I like Learner autonomy. It's an excellent life skill. It gives the students freedom to make some serious decisions for themselves. So, learner autonomy*

kind of promotes that freedom. I have always liked that about autonomy. I think I have some issues with PBLA though" (interview, October 3, 2016).

The other major change in PBLA context was the content of the material, especially with regards to assessment. According to the participants, the PBLA model of teaching required the tasks and tests to have real-world relevance. Any other instruction was prohibited. For instance, teachers were prohibited from teaching grammar explicitly. If any, such instruction had to be embedded within the instruction and practice of a task. Alicia said in her interview, "*Now it seems like it is very much a real-life task, and the test or activity you give has to be real-life. So it's gotta be what they are really really going to use"* (interview, September 27, 2016). Testing has also changed within the PBLA context. Emma said, *"We've gone from standardized testing to more task-based assessment of course. The standardized tests did not necessarily reflect what the learners did in the classroom. To me using a task-based model of assessment, is much fairer. I am not testing them on what I think they should know. I am testing them on what they have learned"* (interview, October 19, 2016). Though not all participants were happy with how assessment was conducted in the PBLA method, the change, they said, had been significant.

***Non-PBLA*.** According to the participants of the study, the non-PBLA ESL context had not seen much of a change in recent years. Some participants, however, believed that the system was about to change. Alex suggested that because of the ESL trend in Canada, the move from pure ESL to university pathway, the move toward the promotion of learner autonomy as an essential lifelong learning skill was inevitable. Anna also mentioned that the intention was there. She predicted that the system would move towards the promotion of learner autonomy and sounded very positive about it. She, however, pointed to some changes in the non-PBLA system saying, *"I find that resources have gotten better for being inclusive of a variety of different*

learning styles and cultures and things like that, and also demanding a little bit more of critical thinking from students but I just don't think that we are totally there yet" (interview, September 29, 2016). She further said it seemed like now the teachers needed to bridge that Gap. She said *"the teachers need to make those adaptations so that when the class is over that's not it. You don't just shut down"* (interview, September 29, 2016).

Discussion

The qualitative strand of the study included semi-structured interviews which aimed at eliciting data from the participants of the study to respond to the research questions. A total of 18 participants with three TESL trainers, six ESL instructors, and nine ESL learners were recruited from multiple sites in Ontario's ESL context. Participants took part in interviews which lasted about 30 minutes. The participants were asked to respond to questions designated for each group. Certain themes and sub-themes corresponding with research questions were identified in the process of data analysis. The emergence of themes was based on the frequency, recurrence, and overlapping. The research aimed at studying the current status of the promotion of learner autonomy and perceptions of learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. Five research questions were posed about the participants' perceptions of learner autonomy, the contribution of the promotion of learner autonomy to L2 learning, desirability, feasibility and challenges in the promotion of learner autonomy, and teachers' roles in an autonomy-inspiring learner autonomy. With regards to the perceptions of learner autonomy, almost all of the participants had a positive view of promoting learner autonomy. The study revealed that the application of a recently introduced method of ESL instruction dubbed as Portfolio Based Language Assessment along with its binder, Language Companion, had deeply affected the participants' understanding of

learner autonomy. There was a clear distinction between the perceptions of those involved in PBLA, and non-PBLA contexts.

Language schools offering Government-funded ESL programs such as LINC across Ontario have recently been required to apply the PBLA model of teaching in their classrooms. Accordingly, teachers need to implement principles of PBLA in their classroom. Students in PBLA context are all expected to have PBLA language portfolio, the Language Companion, and bring it to the class on a daily basis. The shift to the PBLA method has had drastic reactions and reverberations in the context both in positive and negative directions as discussed in the study.

All TESL trainers and the majority of ESL instructors were able to present a relatively acceptable definition of the construct of learner autonomy as compared to the definitions in the relevant literature. However, there were cases of inaccuracy with two of the ESL instructors who lacked clarity on the concept and definition of learner autonomy.

Exploring TESL trainers and ESL instructors' perceptions of learner autonomy, several themes were identified. The themes included *definition, goal-setting, freedom and decision-making, taking responsibility/investment, individuality/Independence/personalization, autonomous learner, awareness raising, documenting,* and *PBLA*. TESL trainers and ESL instructors were also asked how they developed their understanding of learner autonomy. Three themes were identified which included *PBLA training, TESL training,* and *Personal experience*. The responses of the participants suggested that, overall, the majority of the attendees felt very positive about (the promotion) of learner autonomy. TESL trainers and ESL instructors pointed to the positive contribution of the promotion of learner autonomy to L2 learning. The majority of participants believed that promoting learner autonomy would mean student empowerment

through encouraging and enabling the learners to make decisions about their own learning. This would result in an increase of learners' motivation and investment in their language learning experience. Fostering learner autonomy, it was argued, would offer the learners a say in their learning and would facilitate teaching/learning tailored to unique and individual needs of learners who would be exposed to real-world relevance, task-based teaching. The positivity of the participants with regards to the development of autonomy, providing the learners with the freedom in decision-making about their own learning was also evident in the views about the desirability of the promotion of learner autonomy where almost all of the participants said they found it very desirable to promote learner autonomy in class. In reality, however, the situation was a far cry from the ideals held by the participants especially with the introduction of PBLA. Ironically, PBLA and its portfolio, Language Companion were designed and introduced with the explicit aim of promoting learner autonomy in ESL classrooms. Yet, the findings of the study suggested a very different image in sharp contrast of the rosy picture portrayed by its creators. As an aside, I would like to note that such an understanding was only made possible by conducting the qualitative strand of the study where I gained access to participants' unique feelings and perceptions. Though offering certain advantages such as r*eal-world relevance, potential to increase learners` investment in learning, accountability of teachers,* and s*implicity,* the majority of the participants had serious problems with PBLA. PBLA was said to be inefficient, a waste of resources, and time. Many participants described it to be an unnecessary burden to both teachers and learners. Teachers had to develop curricula and materials in the backdrop of inadequate standardized resources while floundering in excessive paperwork involved with the portfolio. It was said to be too controlling, running counter to the spirit of learner autonomy which advocates the freedom of the learner to make decisions about their

learning. It was also criticized for *minimizing teacher autonomy, backwash effect, building gaps in learning, being raw, premature, confusing, and demotivating.* PBLA was further lambasted for its *disregard for Cultural predispositions.* The study suggests that based on the perceptions of the participants, PBLA as an effort to operationalize the promotion of learner autonomy had not succeeded due to the associated problems. The participants offered certain reforms that might remedy the problems. These reforms included providing practical and meaningful training, developing reliable material, standardizing rubrics, and reforming time and class size limitations. The participants drew a fine line between the promotion of learner autonomy and the implementation of the current version of PBLA. With regards to the desirability, unlike PBLA, almost all of the participants found the promotion of learner autonomy desirable, yet the feasibility was blurred with certain limitations and challenges. The challenges, however, did not render it as unfeasible as almost all of the participants, save for one, suggested that the promotion of learner autonomy would be feasible provided that the challenges were tackled or mitigated. These challenges included two groups of organizational and individual barriers each with their own sub-themes.

In terms of organizational challenges, the following sub-themes were identified: *time, requirements, material and resources,* and *school policies*. The individual challenges included the following sub-themes: *learner resistance, self-efficacy beliefs,* and *cultural differences*. Any system aiming at promoting learner autonomy, therefore, would benefit from considering remedies to mitigate the challenges as elaborated in this study. Having discussed TESL trainers' and ESL instructors' positive perceptions about learner autonomy, it would not have been surprising to hear that the majority of the ESL instructors felt as if they promoted learner autonomy at least to some extent despite the challenges. The ESL learners, on the other hand, felt

they would have enjoyed more freedom and autonomy in their classrooms[2]. Nonetheless, the participants spoke of certain roles that instructors had to assume in autonomy-inspiring classroom. These roles included *Facilitator, Motivator,* and *Counselor/Study guide*. The teachers said they enjoyed playing these roles and they had no problems with not feeling as *the* authority in the classroom. The context especially that of government-funded programs had changed drastically as discussed. More and more, LINC centers and their staff including ESL instructors were trying to adjust to the new requirements dictated by PBLA. The private ESL classrooms were seeing the need for promoting learner autonomy as a necessary lifelong learning skill as the trend in Canada's pure ESL was shifting to university pathway. Learner autonomy would prove as a useful quality in the environment with technological advancements facilitating its growth through the internet and smart devices.

To sum up, the qualitative strand of the study revealed that the TESL trainers', ESL instructors', and ESL learners' views about (the promotion of) learner autonomy were positive in general. Some ESL students had certain reservations about the promotion of learner autonomy due to their cultural background or self-efficacy beliefs; however, for the most part, ESL students welcomed the concept of taking charge of their learning.

The context was divided into two main domains of PBLA and non-PBLA model of instruction. The PBLA model, applied in the government-funded ESL programs, though aiming at promoting learner autonomy has failed to deliver on its promises owing to major problems discussed earlier. Also, the majority of the participants, i.e. ESL instructors and ESL students in the PBLA context, voiced their dissatisfaction with the system. Certain remedies were suggested

[2] This will be further discussed in chapters 5 and 6 where I will present the quantitative data on the roles teachers assumed in the class and a combination of qualitative and quantitative data.

that might help improve the situation. Within the non-PBLA domain, there is no systemic effort in promoting learner autonomy. The private ESL schools do not explicitly incorporate the promotion of learner autonomy in their curricula. There were teachers who tried to promote learner autonomy in the non-PBLA context which were mostly, individual, sporadic and non-systemic. Although, the teachers in the non-PBLA domain felt they promoted learner autonomy in their classrooms, in actuality as evidenced by the ESL learners' responses and the ESL instructors' own comments that was not necessarily the case in general in a larger context across the board.

In this chapter, I presented the data analysis procedures, findings, analysis and discussion of the findings within the qualitative strand of the study. In the next chapter, I will present the quantitative data, data analysis and discussion pertaining to research roles in the context. The qualitative and quantitative findings of the study will be merged in chapter 6 to explore how they correlate.

CHAPTER FIVE

Quantitative Results

Introduction

As explained in the previous chapter, the quantitative part of this study involved employing a 24-item questionnaire taken from Fumin, F., & Li, Z. (2012) study. In the following, first the reliability and item analysis of this questionnaire is presented. This is followed by investigation of the construct validity of this instrument. Finally, the data from the questionnaire is analyzed and discussed to explore the status of autonomy promotion by the teachers based on the learners' opinions and perceptions.

Reliability analysis.

In order to investigate the reliability and item efficiency of the questionnaire, Cronbach alpha, item-total correlation, and subscales inter-correlation were employed. It should be noted that these measures were employed on two batches of data: one batch related to the piloting phase with 30 students similar to the final participants of the study, and the other batch related to the whole data collected in the main data collection phase of the study with 114 students. In the following, all these analyses are presented under separate headings.

Reliability and item analysis based on pilot data (n = 30)

As just explained, Cronbach alpha as a measure of internal consistency reliability was employed. The descriptive statistics of all these subscales are presented in Appendix A. Table 5.1 presents the alphas for the autonomy subscales and total scale. Except for the classroom organizer

subscale, the rest of the subscales and total scale have alphas higher than .7, which could be considered acceptable. As for the low alpha of classroom organizer subscale, it should be noted that alpha is dependent on the number of items and participants, which were so low in this pilot study. Given that the observed alpha is just a little below .7 (i.e. .63), this alpha could still be considered acceptable.

Table 5. 1 Reliability Statistics (total scale/subscales)

Total Scale/subscale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Study guide	**.768**	**4**
Classroom organizer	**.631**	**5**
Resource facilitator	**.774**	**6**
Learning regulator	**.818**	**9**
Total scale	**.923**	**24**

Following the computation of alpha, item-total correlation as a measure of item discrimination (i.e. correlation between item and total score) was computed for the items of each autonomy subscale, and then for all the items in the total scale. Tables 2 and 3 present all these correlations in the fourth column from the left. Evidently, the great majority of these correlations are above .4, which indicate high discrimination index for the items. As for the very few low discrimination items, the last column from the left is checked, which shows that by removing these low discrimination items, the observed alpha for each subscale and total scale is not going to improve much. All in all, it is therefore, concluded that the autonomy scale has a well-functioning total scale, subscale, and items with acceptable reliability and item discrimination indices.

Table 5. 2 ***Item-Total Statistics (subscales)***

Subscales		Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Study guide	Communicate1	**11.53**	**4.257**	**.598**	**.710**
	ShrtPlns2	**11.83**	**5.109**	**.662**	**.669**
	MdLngTmPlns3	**11.93**	**6.064**	**.481**	**.758**
	StratCNSL4	**11.40**	**5.076**	**.580**	**.707**
Classroom organizer	OrgGrps5	**15.67**	**6.023**	**.606**	**.481**
	OrgPrs6	**15.97**	**7.689**	**.303**	**.618**
	OrgDbt7	**16.50**	**6.741**	**.253**	**.646**
	AssgnPrsnts8	**15.83**	**6.282**	**.499**	**.527**
	AssgnShPlys9	**16.83**	**5.178**	**.383**	**.604**
Resource facilitator	EncgPeerstd10	**18.77**	**11.564**	**.314**	**.786**
	EncgOnlRscs11	**18.27**	**10.892**	**.473**	**.752**
	EncgLisNws12	**19.03**	**9.068**	**.592**	**.721**
	EncgRdNps13	**19.33**	**9.816**	**.599**	**.720**
	RcmndsRfBks14	**18.93**	**9.995**	**.516**	**.741**
	RcmndsWbsts15	**18.67**	**9.816**	**.638**	**.711**
Learning regulator	JnsActvts16	**31.53**	**16.809**	**.704**	**.773**
	OpnAccnts17	**31.57**	**19.702**	**.379**	**.820**
	EncgRflcts18	**30.93**	**18.961**	**.747**	**.776**
	MntrsPrgrs19	**31.23**	**20.599**	**.447**	**.807**
	EncgSlfAsms20	**31.27**	**21.099**	**.351**	**.817**
	EncgPrAsms21	**31.50**	**19.224**	**.532**	**.798**
	Motivates22	**31.43**	**19.771**	**.509**	**.800**
	PraiseCnfdnc23	**31.27**	**20.409**	**.545**	**.799**
	StrsAnxty24	**31.67**	**19.057**	**.522**	**.799**

Table 5. 3 **Item-Total Statistics (total scale)**

Total scale	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Communicate1	**89.63**	**152.378**	**.594**	**.920**
ShrtPlns2	**89.93**	**156.064**	**.640**	**.919**
MdLngTmPlns3	**90.03**	**158.792**	**.588**	**.920**

StratCNSL4	**89.50**	**153.362**	**.699**	**.917**
OrgGrps5	**89.13**	**156.947**	**.638**	**.919**
OrgPrs6	**89.43**	**163.289**	**.440**	**.922**
OrgDbt7	**89.97**	**158.654**	**.428**	**.923**
AssgnPrsnts8	**89.30**	**158.631**	**.530**	**.920**
AssgnShPlys9	**90.30**	**149.321**	**.620**	**.919**
EncgPeerstd10	**89.83**	**158.075**	**.570**	**.920**
EncgOnlRscs11	**89.33**	**160.092**	**.491**	**.921**
EncgLisNws12	**90.10**	**155.541**	**.524**	**.921**
EncgRdNps13	**90.40**	**156.731**	**.579**	**.920**
RcmndsRfBks14	**90.00**	**158.000**	**.489**	**.921**
RcmndsWbsts15	**89.73**	**155.926**	**.647**	**.919**
JnsActvts16	**89.90**	**150.990**	**.705**	**.917**
OpnAccnts17	**89.93**	**159.237**	**.408**	**.923**
EncgRflcts18	**89.30**	**157.734**	**.691**	**.918**
MntrsPrgrs19	**89.60**	**162.317**	**.416**	**.922**
EncgSlfAsms20	**89.63**	**162.516**	**.390**	**.923**
EncgPrAsms21	**89.87**	**155.292**	**.662**	**.918**
Motivates22	**89.80**	**159.890**	**.490**	**.921**
PraiseCnfdnc23	**89.63**	**160.585**	**.571**	**.920**
StrsAnxty24	**90.03**	**154.999**	**.643**	**.918**

Item clarification

Communicate1	My English teacher communicates with us and learns about our difficulties in learning English.
ShrtPlns2	My English teacher helps us make short-term English study plans.
MdLngTmPlns3	My English teacher helps us make medium-and-long term English study plans.
StratCNSL4	My English teacher tells us about English learning strategies and methods in class.
OrgGrps5	My English teacher organizes group work in class.
OrgPrs6	My English teacher organizes pair work in class.
OrgDbt7	My English teacher organizes English debates in class.
AssgnPrsnts8	My English teacher assigns us to prepare English presentations on a particular topic after class and give them in class.
AssgnShPlys9	My English teacher assigns us to prepare English short plays after class and present them in class.
EncgPeerstd10	My English teacher encourages us to do peer study after class.
EncgOnlRscs11	My English teacher encourages us to use online resources.
EncgLisNws12	My English teacher encourages us to listen to English news after class.
EncgRdNps13	My English teacher encourages us to read English newspapers and magazines after class.

RcmndsRfBks14	My English teacher recommends useful English reference books.
RcmndsWbsts15	My English teacher recommends useful websites about English study.
JnsActvts16	My English teacher joins our English activity, such as English Week, English debates and English speaking contests.
OpnAccnts17	My English teacher opens up public channels for communication, such as public e-mail account.
EncgRflcts18	My English teacher encourages us to reflect on our learning process.
MntrsPrgrs19	My English teacher checks and evaluates our English study at regular intervals.
EncgSlfAsms20	My English teacher encourages us to make self-assessment.
EncgPrAsms21	My English teacher encourages students to give peer assessment.
Motivates22	My English teacher can motivate my interest in learning English well.
PraiseCnfdnc23	My English teacher can help me gain my confidence in learning English well by praising or encourage me.
StrsAnxty24	My English teacher can help me overcome such negative affective factors as anxiety, nervousness and shyness.

Inter-item correlations

Although the computed alphas presented above showed enough evidence for the internal consistency of the autonomy scale, it was decided to compute another alpha and inter-correlations between the subscales of the autonomy scale. Table 4 presents the alpha based on the subscales taken as items, which indicates a large and acceptable alpha (.89) (relevant descriptive statistics in Appendix B).

Table 5. 4 ***Reliability Statistics for total scale and its subscales as items***

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.898	**4**

The fourth column from the left in Table 5 also presents the correlation between each subscale and the total scale, which demonstrates that all the subscales have correlations above .7 with the total scale, hence acceptable measures.

Table 5. 5 ***Item-Total Statistics***

Subscales	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Learning.Regulator	**58.3667**	**75.413**	**.834**	**.871**
Resource.Facilitator	**71.0667**	**99.857**	**.759**	**.873**
Classroom.Organizer	**73.4667**	**108.602**	**.841**	**.856**
Study.Guide	**78.1000**	**113.334**	**.790**	**.874**

Finally, Table 6 presents the Pearson correlations between pairs of autonomy subscales, which indicates that all these subscales are significantly correlated with each other ($p < .05$), hence presenting further evidence as to the positive psychometric characteristics of the autonomy questionnaire.

Table 5. 6 ***Inter-Correlations***

		Learning. Regulator	Resource. Facilitator	Classroom. Organizer	Study. Guide
Learning. Regulator	Pearson Correlation	**1**	**.720****	**.778****	**.752****
	Sig. (2-tailed)		**.000**	**.000**	**.000**
	N	**30**	**30**	**30**	**30**
Resource. Facilitator	Pearson Correlation	**.720****	**1**	**.723****	**.638****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.000**		**.000**	**.000**
	N	**30**	**30**	**30**	**30**
Classroom. Organizer	Pearson Correlation	**.778****	**.723****	**1**	**.767****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.000**	**.000**		**.000**
	N	**30**	**30**	**30**	**30**
Study. Guide	Pearson Correlation	**.752****	**.638****	**.767****	**1**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.000**	**.000**	**.000**	
	N	**30**	**30**	**30**	**30**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Reliability and item analysis based on final data (n = 114)

After computing alphas, item-total correlations, and inter-item correlations based on the pilot study data, it was decided to run all these measures on the final data of the study with 114 participants to see whether the same results are maintained or not.

To begin with, the descriptive statistics of all these subscales were computed, which are presented in Appendix B. Table 7 presents the alphas for the autonomy subscales and total scale. All of the subscales and total scale have alphas higher than .7, which could be considered acceptable.

Table 5. 7 ***Reliability Statistics***

Total Scale/subscale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Study guide	**.737**	**4**
Classroom organizer	**.731**	**5**
Resource facilitator	**.835**	**6**
Learning regulator	**.862**	**9**
Total scale	**.910**	**24**

Tables 8 and 9 present all item-total correlations as a measure of item discrimination (i.e. correlation between item and total score) in the fourth column from the left. Evidently, the great majority of these correlations are above .4, which indicate high discrimination index for the items. As for the very few low discrimination items, the last column from the left is checked, which shows that by removing these low discrimination items, the observed alpha for each subscale and total scale is not going to improve much. All in all, it is, therefore, concluded that

the autonomy scale has well-functioning total scale, subscale, and items with acceptable reliability and item discrimination indices.

Table 5. 8 ***Item-Total Statistics (subscales)***

Subscales		Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Study guide	Communicate1	**11.70**	**4.211**	**.467**	**.721**
	ShrtPlns2	**12.14**	**4.086**	**.656**	**.603**
	MdLngTmPlns3	**12.28**	**4.558**	**.570**	**.658**
	StratCNSL4	**11.67**	**4.720**	**.448**	**.721**
Classroom organizer	OrgGrps5	**15.58**	**4.812**	**.354**	**.706**
	OrgPrs6	**15.79**	**5.194**	**.442**	**.773**
	OrgDbt7	**16.33**	**5.215**	**.299**	**.864**
	AssgnPrsnts8	**15.89**	**4.272**	**.586**	**.656**
	AssgnShPlys9	**17.18**	**4.111**	**.343**	**.883**
Resource facilitator	EncgPeerstd10	**18.12**	**15.401**	**.525**	**.824**
	EncgOnlRscs11	**17.89**	**14.077**	**.639**	**.801**
	EncgLisNws12	**18.65**	**13.964**	**.604**	**.810**
	EncgRdNps13	**18.82**	**14.872**	**.636**	**.803**
	RcmndsRfBks14	**18.47**	**14.163**	**.620**	**.805**
	RcmndsWbsts15	**18.04**	**15.291**	**.647**	**.803**
Learning regulator	JnsActvts16	**31.61**	**28.487**	**.522**	**.854**
	OpnAccnts17	**31.60**	**27.499**	**.519**	**.856**
	EncgRflcts18	**31.26**	**27.134**	**.729**	**.834**
	MntrsPrgrs19	**31.39**	**28.912**	**.560**	**.850**
	EncgSlfAsms20	**31.44**	**27.186**	**.623**	**.844**
	EncgPrAsms21	**31.51**	**27.332**	**.628**	**.843**
	Motivates22	**31.46**	**28.215**	**.610**	**.845**
	PraiseCnfdnc23	**31.25**	**29.320**	**.617**	**.846**
	StrsAnxty24	**31.44**	**28.567**	**.546**	**.851**

Table 5. 9 ***Item-Total Statistics (total scale)***

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Communicate1	**89.26**	**159.558**	**.409**	**.909**
ShrtPlns2	**89.70**	**159.574**	**.483**	**.907**
MdLngTmPlns3	**89.84**	**160.417**	**.487**	**.907**

StratCNSL4	**89.23**	**156.638**	**.625**	**.905**
OrgGrps5	**88.88**	**161.029**	**.518**	**.907**
OrgPrs6	**89.09**	**163.408**	**.399**	**.909**
OrgDbt7	**89.63**	**165.651**	**.295**	**.913**
AssgnPrsnts8	**89.19**	**160.794**	**.424**	**.909**
AssgnShPlys9	**90.47**	**158.729**	**.335**	**.912**
EncgPeerstd10	**89.61**	**153.903**	**.666**	**.904**
EncgOnlRscs11	**89.39**	**155.354**	**.542**	**.906**
EncgLisNws12	**90.14**	**156.794**	**.455**	**.909**
EncgRdNps13	**90.32**	**157.103**	**.552**	**.906**
RcmndsRfBks14	**89.96**	**152.636**	**.645**	**.904**
RcmndsWbsts15	**89.53**	**156.039**	**.663**	**.904**
JnsActvts16	**89.74**	**155.311**	**.603**	**.905**
OpnAccnts17	**89.72**	**157.301**	**.440**	**.909**
EncgRflcts18	**89.39**	**155.319**	**.652**	**.904**
MntrsPrgrs19	**89.51**	**158.624**	**.531**	**.907**
EncgSlfAsms20	**89.56**	**155.257**	**.575**	**.906**
EncgPrAsms21	**89.63**	**154.394**	**.628**	**.904**
Motivates22	**89.58**	**157.308**	**.567**	**.906**
PraiseCnfdnc23	**89.37**	**157.828**	**.668**	**.905**
StrsAnxty24	**89.56**	**155.930**	**.608**	**.905**

Inter-item correlations (final data)

Despite enough evidence for the internal consistency of the autonomy scale, it was decided to compute another alpha and inter-correlations between the subscales of the autonomy scale. Table 10 presents the alpha based on the subscales taken as items, which indicates a large and acceptable alpha (.79) (relevant descriptives in Appendix C).

Table 5. 10 ***Reliability Statistics***

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.796	**4**

The fourth column from the left in Table 11 also presents the correlation between each subscale and the total scale, which demonstrates that all the subscales have correlations above .6 with the total scale, hence acceptable measures.

Table 5. 11 ***Item-Total Statistics***

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Learning.Regulator	**58.1228**	**65.631**	**.736**	**.722**
Resource.Facilitator	**71.4912**	**90.765**	**.696**	**.697**
Classroom.Organizer	**73.2982**	**127.645**	**.643**	**.766**
Study.Guide	**77.5614**	**127.009**	**.610**	**.770**

Finally, Table 12 presents the Pearson correlations between pairs of autonomy subscales, which indicates that all these subscales are significantly correlated with each other ($p < .05$), hence presenting further evidence as to the positive psychometric characteristics of the autonomy questionnaire.

Table 5. 12 ***Inter-Correlations***

		Learning. Regulator	Resource. Facilitator	Classroom. Organizer	Study. Guide
Learning. Regulator	Pearson Correlation	**1**	**.706****	**.536****	**.527****
	Sig. (2-tailed)		**.000**	**.000**	**.000**
	N	**114**	**114**	**114**	**114**
Resource. Facilitator	Pearson Correlation	**.706****	**1**	**.498****	**.445****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.000**		**.000**	**.000**
	N	**114**	**114**	**114**	**114**
Classroom. Organizer	Pearson Correlation	**.536****	**.498****	**1**	**.691****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.000**	**.000**		**.000**
	N	**114**	**114**	**114**	**114**
Study. Guide	Pearson Correlation	**.527****	**.445****	**.691****	**1**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.000**	**.000**	**.000**	
	N	**114**	**114**	**114**	**114**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In sum the above reliability analyses indicate that based on both the pilot and main data, the autonomy scale is of high internal consistency reliability and item discrimination indices.

Construct validity

As it was explained before, this study employed a 24-item questionnaire taken from Fumin, F., & Li, Z. (2012) study. In their study, they ran exploratory factor analysis (PCA) employing Varimax rotation, which resulted in a four factor model, each factor representing one of the subscales. Although their study was based on a very large sample, I decided to run another PCA based on the final data of the study to see whether the same factor structure as Fumin and Li found emerges. It should be noted that PCA requires very large sample data; therefore, the sample employed in the pilot data could not yield very acceptable results. That is why the main data of the study with 114 respondents was employed in PCA.

The first PCA output table, that is the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure (Table 13), shows statistics on the sampling adequacy for the analysis of the questionnaire (KMO = .707) which is acceptable according to Field (2005). Bartlett's test of sphericity was also found significant indicating large enough correlations between items for PCA; therefore, this sample can be considered adequate for running PCA.

Table 5. 13 ***KMO and Bartlett's Test***

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		**.707**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	**1687.830**
	df	**276**
	Sig.	**.000**

Next, PCA was set to extract factors based on Kaiser's criterion. That is to say, only factors with an eigenvalue of 1.0 or more were retained. According to Table 14, six factors were extracted which explain more than two third of the variance of the whole variance (cumulative = 68.36) which could be considered quite acceptable.

Table 5. 14 ***Total Variance Explained***

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	**8.387**	**34.948**	**34.948**	**4.816**	**20.067**	**20.067**
2	**2.228**	**9.282**	**44.230**	**2.783**	**11.597**	**31.665**
3	**1.954**	**8.140**	**52.370**	**2.537**	**10.570**	**42.235**
4	**1.489**	**6.203**	**58.573**	**2.536**	**10.568**	**52.803**
5	**1.255**	**5.230**	**63.803**	**2.265**	**9.438**	**62.241**
6	**1.095**	**4.561**	**68.364**	**1.469**	**6.122**	**68.364**
7	**.980**	**4.085**	**72.449**			
8	**.887**	**3.697**	**76.146**			
9	**.780**	**3.249**	**79.395**			
10	**.734**	**3.060**	**82.455**			
11	**.670**	**2.793**	**85.248**			
12	**.544**	**2.266**	**87.514**			
13	**.505**	**2.103**	**89.617**			
14	**.397**	**1.655**	**91.272**			
15	**.363**	**1.513**	**92.784**			
16	**.359**	**1.497**	**94.281**			
17	**.287**	**1.195**	**95.476**			
18	**.254**	**1.059**	**96.535**			
19	**.227**	**.945**	**97.480**			
20	**.212**	**.883**	**98.363**			
21	**.147**	**.613**	**98.977**			
22	**.105**	**.437**	**99.414**			
23	**.083**	**.346**	**99.760**			
24	**.058**	**.240**	**100.000**			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 15 presents the six factor loadings after varimax rotation. This table presents only those eigenvalues above .3 in agreement with Fumin and Li's study. The items have been also

reordered in a way that misloading items (marked with asterisk) can be distinguished from the correctly loading items in each subscale. What could be understood from this table is that in sum:

- In the "learning regulator" subscale, out of 9 items 7 items have loaded in the first factor, and only two items have misloading (i.e. 16 & 24).
- In the "resource facilitator" subscale, out of 6 items, 5 items have loaded on the second factor, and 1 item has misloading (i.e. 10). Moreover, it should be noted that two correctly loading items (i.e. 14 & 15) also have some shared loading with some marginal difference on the first factor too.
- In the "classroom organizer" subscale, out of 5 items 2 items (i.e. 7 & 9) have misloading, and three items have loaded on the third factor.
- In the "study guide" subscale, out of 4 items 2 items (i.e. 2 & 3) have loaded on the fourth factor, and two items have misloading (i.e. 1 & 4).

What could be said about the above found factor structure is that it seems there are 7 misleading items, and the 17 remaining items have loaded on the same factors as found in Fumin and Li's study. Since a much smaller sample was employed in this study, such a factor structure could be considered corresponding well enough with the factor structure found by Fumin and Li. Therefore, it could be stated that the autonomy scale employed in this study has sufficient construct validity almost showing the same original factor structure.

Table 5. 15 ***Rotated Component Matrix[a]***

Subscales	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6

Learning regulator	EncgRflcts18	**.783**					
	EncgSlfAsms20	**.730**					
	OpnAccnts17	**.695**					
	Motivates22	**.666**					
	EncgPrAsms21	**.624**					**.446**
	MntrsPrgrs19	**.551**					
	PraiseCnfdnc23	**.544**				**.470**	
	JnsActvts16			**.637***			
	StrsAnxty24					**.665***	
Resource facilitator	EncgPeerstd10	**.720***					
	RcmndsRfBks14	**.510**	**.456**				
	RcmndsWbsts15	**.471**	**.453**				
	EncgLisNws12		**.835**				
	EncgRdNps13		**.755**				
	EncgOnlRscs11		**.714**				
Classroom organizer	OrgDbt7			**.516***			
	AssgnPrsnts8				**.772**		
	OrgGrps5				**.703**		
	OrgPrs6				**.506**	**.561**	
	AssgnShPlys9						**.833***
Study guide	ShrtPlns2			**.753**			
	MdLngTmPlns3			**.735**			
	StratCNSL4	**.418**			**.646***		
	Communicate1					**.747***	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

Main data analysis (questionnaire)

As a reminder, this study made use of an autonomy questionnaire to see to what extent and how teachers promote learner autonomy according to students' opinion. To this end, the data collected from the questionnaire is analyzed in separate stages, presented under the following headings.

Compare subscales totals with each other

To begin with, I decided to compare the subscales means with one another to see in which areas of autonomy-promoting activities (i.e. subscales) autonomy is promoted more by teachers according to students' opinions.

The total score for each autonomy subscale was supposed to be computed by adding the scores of the relevant items in each subscale. However, since the subscales had unequal number of items, the mean score for each subscale was computed summing the item scores in each subscale and then dividing the sum by the number of items in that subscale. In this way fair comparisons could be made among the subscales. The descriptive statistics of these subscale mean scores are presented in Table 16. Evidently, the highest subscale mean score belongs to "Classroom Organizer" subscale, and the lowest belongs to "Resource Facilitator" subscale.

Table 5. 16 ***Descriptive Statistics***

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Std. Error		Std. Error
Learning.Regulator1	**114**	**2.44**	**4.89**	**3.92**	**.656**	**-.54**	**.226**	**-.70**	**.449**
Resource.Facilitator2	**114**	**1.67**	**5.00**	**3.66**	**.752**	**-.44**	**.226**	**-.14**	**.449**
Classroom.Organizer3	**114**	**1.80**	**5.00**	**4.03**	**.508**	**-1.46**	**.226**	**5.22**	**.449**
Study.Guide4	**114**	**1.50**	**5.00**	**3.98**	**.669**	**-1.10**	**.226**	**2.22**	**.449**
Valid N (listwise)	**114**								

In order to see whether the difference among these subscale mean scores is of statistical significance, the normality of the mean scores were checked by computing skewedness and kurtosis ratios (i.e. by dividing the skewedness and kurtosis values by their relevant standard errors) from Table 16. Since two ratios are beyond -+1.96, the data could not be considered

normal, therefore, Friedman test was a non-parametric test was run to compare the subscales mean scores.

Table 17 presents the mean ranks for each subscale since Friedman as a non-parametric test works based on mean ranks rather than arithmetic means.

Table 5. 17 ***Ranks***

	Mean Rank
Learning Regulator	**2.65**
Resource Facilitator	**1.98**
Classroom Organizer	**2.80**
Study Guide	**2.57**

Table 18 presents the main Friedman test results, which indicate that there is a significant difference somewhere among the subscales of autonomy ($p < .05$). In order to see which subscales are of significantly larger or smaller mean ranks, pot hoc pairwise comparisons were run whose results in Table 19 indicate that "Resource Facilitator" is of significantly smaller mean rank than all other subscales ($p < .05$). The other subscales, however, do not differ from each other in mean ranks.

All in all, these results indicate that students receive autonomy promotion from their teachers equally most by "Learning Regulator, Classroom Organizer, and Study Guide" actions by their teachers (i.e. subscales), and least in "Resource Facilitator" actions.

Table 5. 18 ***Test Statistics[a]***

N	**114**
Chi-Square	**27.367**
df	**3**
Asymp. Sig.	**.000**

a. Friedman Test

Table 5. 19 **Post hoc Pairwise comparison of subscales**

Sample1-Sample2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj.Sig.
Resource.Facilitator2-Study. Guide4	-.588	.171	-3.437	.001	.004
Resource.Facilitator2-Learning. Regulator1	.667	.171	3.899	.000	.001
Resource.Facilitator2-Classroom. Organizer3	-.816	.171	-4.771	.000	.000
Study.Guide4-Learning. Regulator1	.079	.171	.462	.644	1.000
Study.Guide4-Classroom. Organizer3	.228	.171	1.334	.182	1.000
Learning.Regulator1-Classroom. Organizer3	-.149	.171	-.872	.383	1.000

Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and Sample 2 distributions are the same.
Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Compare subscale totals with theoretical mean

Although the above comparison showed that teachers promote autonomy in different action groups (i.e. subscales) differentially, I decided to see whether the current observed level of autonomy promotion by teachers by different action groups is significantly above or below average. To do so, the theoretical mean/median (i.e. population mean/median) needed to be computed for each item of the questionnaire. Since the items were scored on the Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, the mid score (i.e. 3) was taken as the theoretical mean/median of each item. Then for each subscale, the subscale total theoretical mean/median was computed by multiplying the number of items in each subscale by 3 (i.e. mid score for each item). Finally, one sample mean/median comparison statistics depending on the normality of the data were employed as

follows. Since the skewedness and kurtosis ratios computed from Table 20 showed that Learning Regulator and Resource Facilitator subscales had normally distributed data, one sample t test was run for them (Table 21), but for Study Guide and Classroom Organizer subscales One sample Wilcoxon signed ranks test was run (Table 22).

Table 5. 20 ***Descriptive Statistics***

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Std. Error		Std. Error
Learning.Regulator	**114**	**22.00**	**44.00**	**35.36**	**5.90**	**-.54**	**.226**	**-.709**	**.449**
Resource.Facilitator	**114**	**10.00**	**30.00**	**22.00**	**4.515**	**-.44**	**.226**	**-.144**	**.449**
Classroom.Organizer	**114**	**9.00**	**25.00**	**20.19**	**2.54**	**-1.46**	**.226**	**5.225**	**.449**
Study.Guide	**114**	**6.00**	**20.00**	**15.92**	**2.67**	**-1.10**	**.226**	**2.223**	**.449**
Valid N (listwise)	**114**								

With regard to the descriptives in Table 20 and the one sample test results in Tables 21 and 22, it could be concluded that according to students' opinions, the current observed level of employing autonomy-promoting actions by the teachers in different action groups (i.e. subscales) is significantly above average.

Table 5. 21 ***One-Sample t Test***

	Test Value = 27					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Learning.Regulator1	**15.119**	**113**	**.000**	**8.36842**	**7.2718**	**9.4650**
	Test Value = 18					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Resource.Facilitator2	**9.458**	**113**	**.000**	**4.00000**	**3.1621**	**4.8379**

Table 5. 22 ***One sample Wilcoxon signed ranks test***

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The median of Classroom Organizer3 equals 15.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The median of Study.Guide4 equals 12.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Compare items with theoretical mean

Although the above results indicated that in students' opinions the current observed level of autonomy-promoting actions by the teachers in different action groups (i.e. subscales) is significantly above average, it was decided to have a more in-depth analysis by doing the same one sample mean/median comparison as above for each individual item (i.e. autonomy-promoting action) of the autonomy scale. Therefore, first the descriptive statistics as well as response frequencies of all the individual items were computed (Table 23 & Appendix E respectively). Evidently, all the items have a mean/median above average give or take, with item 5 of the highest mean and item 9 with the lowest mean. In order to see whether these means/medians are significantly above average or not, one sample t test or One sample Wilcoxon signed ranks test was employed depending on the normality of the items data. It should be noted that again the normality was checked by computing skewedness and kurtosis ratios from Table

23. Then for items 3, 12, 13, 14, and 15 which had normally distributed data, one sample t test was run; for the rest of the items One sample Wilcoxon signed ranks test was run though.

Table 5. 23 **Item descriptives**

	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev	Skewness	Std. Error of Skewness	Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis
OrgGrps5	**4.61**	**5.00**	**5**	**.723**	**-2.699**	**.226**	**9.717**	**.449**
OrgPrs6	**4.40**	**5.00**	**5**	**.700**	**-1.064**	**.226**	**1.042**	**.449**
AssgnPrsnts8	**4.30**	**5.00**	**5**	**.882**	**-1.414**	**.226**	**2.269**	**.449**
StratCNSL4	**4.26**	**4.00**	**5**	**.873**	**-1.355**	**.226**	**2.239**	**.449**
Communicate1	**4.23**	**5.00**	**5**	**1.013**	**-1.512**	**.226**	**2.057**	**.449**
PraiseCnfdnc23	**4.12**	**4.00**	**4**	**.754**	**-.460**	**.226**	**-.344**	**.449**
EncgRflcts18	**4.11**	**4.00**	**5**	**.916**	**-.775**	**.226**	**-.247**	**.449**
EncgOnlRscs11	**4.11**	**4.00**	**5**	**1.076**	**-1.168**	**.226**	**.762**	**.449**
MntrsPrgrs19	**3.98**	**4.00**	**4**	**.872**	**-.780**	**.226**	**.173**	**.449**
RcmndsWbsts15	**3.96**	**4.00**	**4**	**.861**	**-.439**	**.226**	**-.523**	**.449**
StrsAnxty24	**3.93**	**4.00**	**4**	**.938**	**-.775**	**.226**	**.451**	**.449**
EncgSlfAsms20	**3.93**	**4.00**	**5**	**1.028**	**-.852**	**.226**	**.457**	**.449**
Motivates22	**3.91**	**4.00**	**4**	**.908**	**-1.125**	**.226**	**1.988**	**.449**
EncgPeerstd10	**3.88**	**4.00**	**5**	**.979**	**-.325**	**.226**	**-1.013**	**.449**
OrgDbt7	**3.86**	**4.00**	**4**	**.911**	**-.575**	**.226**	**.305**	**.449**
EncgPrAsms21	**3.86**	**4.00**	**4**	**1.003**	**-.890**	**.226**	**.662**	**.449**
ShrtPlns2	**3.79**	**4.00**	**4**	**.877**	**-.694**	**.226**	**.715**	**.449**

OpnAccnts17	**3.77**	**4.00**	**5**	**1.129**	**-.589**	**.226**	**-.493**	**.449**
JnsActvts16	**3.75**	**4.00**	**4**	**.983**	**-.512**	**.226**	**-.208**	**.449**
MdLngTmPlns3	**3.65**	**4.00**	**4**	**.809**	**-.497**	**.226**	**.897**	**.449**
RcmndsRfBks14	**3.53**	**4.00**	**4**	**1.083**	**-.325**	**.226**	**-.585**	**.449**
EncgLisNws12	**3.35**	**3.00**	**4**	**1.137**	**-.212**	**.226**	**-.783**	**.449**
EncgRdNps13	**3.18**	**3.00**	**3**	**.943**	**.156**	**.226**	**-.495**	**.449**
AssgnShPlys9	**3.02**	**3.00**	**3[a]**	**1.269**	**-.033**	**.226**	**-1.044**	**.449**

The one sample t tests and one sample Wilcoxon signed ranks tests results in tables 24 and 25 indicate that according to the students' opinion, promotion of autonomy by teachers is above average in terms of all the items of the questionnaire expect for item 9 which is only about average. In other words, according to the students' opinions, teachers' employment of different autonomy-promoting actions and activities is well above average (i.e. employed often or always) except for the action named in item 9 which is just employed occasionally on the average.

Table 5. 24 ***One-Sample Test***

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
MdLngTmPlns3	**8.567**	**113**	**.000**	**.649**	**.50**	**.80**
EncgLisNws12	**3.296**	**113**	**.001**	**.351**	**.14**	**.56**
EncgRdNps13	**1.986**	**113**	**.049**	**.175**	**.00**	**.35**
RcmndsRfBks14	**5.191**	**113**	**.000**	**.526**	**.33**	**.73**
RcmndsWbsts15	**11.959**	**113**	**.000**	**.965**	**.81**	**1.12**

Table 25
One sample Wilcoxon signed ranks test for items

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The median of Communicate1 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The median of ShrtPlns2 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The median of StratCNSL4 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
4	The median of OrgGrps5 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The median of OrgPrs6 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
6	The median of OrgDbt7 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
7	The median of AssgnPrsnts8 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
8	The median of AssgnShPlys9 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.902	Retain the null hypothesis.
9	The median of EncgPeerstd10 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
10	The median of EncgOnlRscs11 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
11	The median of InsActvts16 equals 3. Double-click to activate	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
12	The median of OpnAccnts17 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
13	The median of EncgRflcts18 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
14	The median of MntrsPrgrs19 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
15	The median of EncgSlfAsms20 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
16	The median of EncgPrAsms21 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
17	The median of Motivates22 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
18	The median of PraiseCnfdnc23 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
19	The median of StrsAnxty24 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Discussion

To respond to the Research Question on teachers' roles in relation to the promotion of learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context, along with the data elicited in the qualitative strand, the study made use of the quantitative strand using a well-established questionnaire to provide supplementary data to further explore the roles assumed by teachers in the context.

Once the questionnaire was piloted, and the reliability and construct validity assumptions of the instrument were met, data from the study was analyzed to explore learners' perceptions

Types of teachers' roles.

A PCA was used to study the construct validity of the questionnaire. Confirming the construct validity of the instrument, the analysis of the findings suggested that the factor structure discovered corresponded with the factor structure found by Fumin and Li study (2012). The four subscales of learning regulator, resource facilitator, classroom organizer, and study guide were identified as distinct roles assumed by teachers in promoting learner autonomy.

Learning regulator. This factor contained items on a range of assessment methods including self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment. It further contained items studying teachers' participation in extracurricular activities, teachers' efforts in helping learners develop positive self-efficacy beliefs, gain confidence, and mitigate negative affective factors such as anxiety, nervousness, and shyness.

Resource facilitator. This factor contained items to study whether teachers encouraged learners to make use of resources for improving their language proficiency. These included online resources as well as English newspapers, magazines, news, reference books, websites, etc.

Classroom organizer. This factor contained items to study the role of the teacher as a classroom organizer. The factor studied if teachers organized the students into pairs, groups, and whether teachers encouraged presentations, debates, short plays, etc. in class.

Study guide. This factor contained items to study whether teachers provided their learners with counseling about setting short term/long term goals, learning strategies, weaknesses and strengths, etc.

The analysis of learners' perceptions of teachers' roles in Ontario's ESL context suggests that teachers assume multiple distinct roles in the context and are not limited to the singular role of transmitting knowledge to the learners.

Comparison of Subscales

Once it was established that different distinct roles were assumed by teachers, I decided to study the order in which these roles ranked to discover which areas were the most and the least focused in the context. To this end, first I compared the means of the identified subscales with each other. The highest subscale mean score belonged to classroom organizer (M=4.03), followed by study guide (M=3.98), learning regulator (M=3.92), and finally resource facilitator (M=3.66). Not only did the resource facilitator rank lowest among the four subscales, it turned out to be significantly smaller than the other subscales. The other three subscales did not prove to be significantly different with regards to their mean scores meaning that the teachers paid more or less the same level of attention to these roles.

Although my study was not a comparative study combining the results of Fumin and Li's (2012), I felt it would be interesting to include a brief comparison of the four subscales of teacher roles in the two studies which occurred in two different contexts.

The study conducted by Fumin and Li (2012) yielded the following results: Ranked from the lowest to the highest are study guide (M=3.3275), learning regulator (M=3.3661), classroom organizer (3.3873) and resource facilitator (3.5061). From the perspective of the actual roles teachers played, teachers as resource facilitators scored the highest, but the average points for the other three roles (including study guides, learning regulators and classroom organizers) were higher than 3.3 and there was no substantial difference (Fumin and Li, 2012).

Table 26, presents a concise comparison between the descriptive analyses of the two studies. Interestingly in both studies one subscale, albeit a different one, significantly differs

from the other three subscales while there is no substantial difference among the other three. Another interesting observation is the difference between the resource facilitator subscale in my study compared to Fumin and Li (2012). While in my study resource facilitator ranks the lowest with significant difference, it ranks the highest in Fumin and Li (2012) study. The differences in my view suggest the variability of the importance attached to certain teacher roles in different ESL contexts.

Table 26

My Study	Fumin and Li study (2012)
classroom organizer (M=4.03)	resource facilitator (3.5061)
study guide (M=3.98)	classroom organizer (3.3873)
learning regulator (M=3.92)	learning regulator (M=3.3661)
resource facilitator (M=3.66)	study guide (M=3.3275)

Comparison of Subscales, Items with theoretical mean.

Another step was to find out if, based on the perceptions of learners, the current observed level of teachers' roles in promoting learner autonomy was below or above average. To do so, two steps were taken. As the first step, subscale totals were compared with theoretical mean. The second step was to compare items with the theoretical mean. With regards to subscales, according to students' opinions, the current observed level of employing autonomy-promoting actions by the teachers in different action groups (i.e. subscales) was significantly above average. The comparison of the items with the theoretical mean also showed that, according to students' opinions, except for one item, teachers' employment of different autonomy-promoting actions and activities were well above average.

Conclusion

The four roles identified in the quantitative strand of the study help with the promotion of learner autonomy. Teachers who aim at promoting learner autonomy will find assuming a combination of the multiple roles productive. A rather alarming discovery in the analysis of the students' perceptions of teachers' roles in promoting learner autonomy is the role of the teacher as resource facilitator being significantly smaller than the other three roles of classroom organizer, learning regulator, and study guide. The emergence of multiple distinct roles for teachers in the promotion of learner autonomy is positive and suggests that teachers do not assume a singular transmitting role only. On the other hand, the significant difference between resource facilitator and the other three roles with this role being significantly smaller while there is no significant difference between the other three roles suggests that the role of the teacher as the resource facilitator is relatively undermined in the context. Ironically, the advancement of technology, the emergence of smart devices, mobile technology and the plethora of helpful online resources should serve as incentives for promoting learner autonomy as they provide the learner with the facilities and affordances to become autonomous. Future research may shed light on the reasons for the role resource facilitator being smaller than the other three in the context. Delving deeper into item analysis of the descriptive statistics, it can be inferred that goal-setting items rank lower than the mean of the instrument. The two items of "My English teacher helps us make short-term English study plans" (M=3.79), and "My English teacher helps us make medium-and-long term English study plans" (M=3.65) forming a construct of "goal setting" (M=3.72) rank lower than the mean of the instrument (M=3.89). Goal-setting is one of the major strategies in promoting learner autonomy as it helps with getting the learners involved in their learning experience and should be highly emphasized in an autonomy-inspiring environment.

Also, the three items related to the motivation (M=3.91), overcoming negative affective factors (M=3.93), and confidence building (M=4.12) forming the construct of motivating learners (M=3.99) compared with the instrument (M=3.89) suggest that relative to other strategies and roles assumed by teachers, the role of teachers as motivator stands around average.

On a positive note, as discussed earlier, either in the case of the four subscales or individual items, according to the perceptions of the learners, the teachers' performance stands above average in relation to the theoretical mean of that item.

Nevertheless, to form a comprehensive understanding of the current roles assumed by teachers with regards to the promotion of learner autonomy, it is essential to combine the data in the quantitative strand with that of the qualitative strand. In the next chapter, I will present a thorough elaboration of the merging of the qualitative and quantitative results of the study.

CHAPTER SIX

Merged Mixed Methods Results

Introduction

This chapter presents a combination of the qualitative and quantitative findings of the study on participants' perceptions of teachers' roles in Ontario's ESL context with regards to the promotion of learner autonomy in response to the last research question:

What roles do teachers assume in Ontario's ESL context with regards to the development of language learner autonomy?

Data analysis will be merged to present a meaningful and comprehensive picture of the current status of the roles assumed by ESL teachers in promoting learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. The chapter will then conclude with implications for practice.

Teacher roles. The analysis of the qualitative and quantitative strands of the study suggested that multiple roles were assumed by teachers in Ontario's ESL context with regards to the promotion of learner autonomy. Note should be taken that the literature on learner autonomy suggests varied terminology for teacher roles. Benson (2011) refers to Barnes and Wright (1987) and discusses the shift from transmission to interpretation teaching. Roles assumed by teachers aiming at promoting learner autonomy include facilitator, helper, coordinator, counselor, consultant, adviser, knower, resource, etc. According to Benson (2011), these roles were reduced by Voller (1997) to three roles of facilitator, counselor, and resource. In this classification facilitator is the teacher who provides for learning; counselor maintains a one-to-one interaction; and as resource, the teacher is viewed as a source of knowledge and expertise. These roles are

further categorized by Voller (1997) as technical and psycho-social support, each with its own features. In the technical support category, teachers help learners take charge of their own learning, evaluate themselves, and develop skills to practice autonomy. Teachers can help learners become autonomous by encouraging learners to perform a needs assessment to identify their needs. These may include both communication and learning needs. Learners should be encouraged to set objectives, plan, select materials and approaches, organize interactions, and assess and evaluate themselves. The evaluation includes peer- and self-assessment, and progress checks. Teachers should also help learners develop the skills necessary to carry out the above mentioned by raising their awareness and providing them with metacognition about their learning process.

Benson (2011) further describes the psycho-social support as *"the personal qualities of the facilitator, the capacity for motivating learners, and an ability to raise learners' awareness"* (Benson, 2011, pp. 186-7).

Discussing teachers' roles Benson (2011) warns against two intriguing paradoxes. First, given that to become autonomous, learners need to be supported and prepared by teachers, teachers have to beware not to give learners too much or too little guidance. Second, *"teachers need to stop teaching students"* (Benson, 2011, p. 187).

The role of the teachers has also been described as a manager as in Higgs (1988) who describes the teacher as a manager of a learning program and a resource person. Gardner & Miller (2002) describe teacher's roles as information provider, counselor, authentic language user, manager, materials writer, assessor, administrator, and organizer. Fumin & Lee (2012) choose the four

roles of learning regulator, resource facilitator, classroom organizer, and study guide as the basis for their study of teachers' roles in promoting students' learner autonomy.

The diversity of teachers' roles presented above highlights the subjectivity of viewpoints regarding their classification. Different terminology and classification may be used by different individuals to describe teachers' roles.

Observation; Interview-Survey Discrepancy

An intriguing observation I made throughout the analyses and merging of the data from the two strands of qualitative and quantitative was the discrepancy between the responses in the interviews and the surveys. The comparison of the questionnaire items with their theoretical means and the comparison of the subscales with their theoretical means suggested that teachers assumed roles that helped promote learner autonomy overall. Every single item on the questionnaire and every subscale of the teachers' roles ranked higher than their theoretical means. However, a thorough analysis of ESL learners' perceptions in the qualitative strand did not concur with such stance. Indeed, the learners' comments in the interviews suggested that they, for the most part, did not feel as if teachers were taking steps to promote learner autonomy in the classroom. Below I will present some examples as evidence to this statement. The data presented here is extracted from the interviews:

Table 6. 1 *ESL learners' perceptions*

Mahmoud PBLA	**Joana PBLA**	**Selena PBLA**	**David**	**Eric**	**Ali**	**Alan**	**Flora**	**Nathan**	**Total**
Does your teacher encourage you to make decisions about your learning?									6 N 2 Y/N 1 Y
Yes/No	No	No	No	Yes/No	Yes/No	No	No	No	
Does your teacher encourage you to set short/long-term goals?									5 N 3 Y/N 1 Y
Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes/No	No	No	Yes/No	
Does your teacher discuss learning strategies with you?									6 N 3 Y
Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	
Does your teacher discuss your weaknesses and strengths with you?									4 N 3 Y/N 2 Y
Yes/ No	No	No	Yes	Yes/ No	Yes	No	Yes/No	Yes	
Do you have one-on-one counseling sessions with your teacher?									4 N 5 Y
Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	
Does your teacher encourage you to have/use a language portfolio?									6 N 3 Y
Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	
Do you feel in control of your learning?									9 N
No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	
Does your teacher encourage you to use online resources?									9 Y
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Does your teacher encourage self-assessment?									8 N 1 Y
No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	
To what extent would you say your class is teacher-centered?									
60 %	Not sure	70 %	60 %	60%	50 %	Not Sure	Not sure	80 %	
What is your preference? Teacher-centered (TC) or learner-centered (LC) classroom?									8 LC 1TC
LC	LC	LC	LC	LC	LC	LC	TC	LC	

Upon completion of the study, I realized the value of qualitative approach for the truthful insight it provides the researcher. Given its benefits as discussed in chapter 3, the qualitative approach enables the researcher to tap into areas that would otherwise remain hidden to the researcher. Moreover, despite offering valuable benefits, certain instruments of quantification used in the quantitative research are vulnerable to a number of factors. After deliberating on the issue I came to the conclusion that the origin of the discrepancy in my research was because of *response bias*.

Response bias is a general term for a variety of cognitive biases that can affect the veracity and accuracy of participants' responses particularly in a questionnaire or survey (Furnham, 1986). Martin (1962) suggests that different forms of response biases surface because due to the complexity of their minds human beings do not simply respond passively to stimuli, but rather factor in multiple parameters when responding to a question under certain circumstances. In the case of this research, I believe the participants were mostly affected by *social desirability bias* (Nederhof, 1985) where the respondent tries to appear favorable to the researcher, and also *acquiescence bias* (Watson, 1992) where the respondent has a tendency to agree with most of the questions to appear agreeable to the researcher. Having said this however, it should be noted that this is by no means an undermining of the valuable data collected in the quantitative strand as that also serves as a reflection of different roles assumed by teachers in the context. The quantitative strand did, in fact, serve its purpose for the study and led to a clarification of what roles were assumed and which ones were more/less emphasized by ESL instructors in Ontario's ESL context.

Observation; Limitation of Analysis

While this is worth being considered as a limitation of the study, I found it worthwhile to note here that in an ideal situation I would have liked to explore distinct groups with distinct perceptions unique to that specific group. However, in practice, certain issues caused complications. To study the participants' perceptions of the promotion of learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context, I chose to study three groups of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners to present a comprehensive portrayal of the situation in the context. While conducting the qualitative and quantitative strands of the study I encountered the following issues:

- A great number of TESL trainers also work as ESL instructors. Therefore, their views also represent the perceptions of the latter group. It can also be said that both of their professions, reciprocally affect each other. In general, TESL trainers shared similar views on the promotion of learner autonomy as discussed in chapter four. The most noticeable difference between the two groups was mostly in the theoretical sense. TESL trainers were in general, more knowledgeable of the construct of learner autonomy primarily because of their background in the field. Another difference between TESL trainers and ESL instructors was on PBLA in the sense that even though the TESL trainers in the study acknowledged certain complications as major challenges in implementing PBLA and its binder, the Language Companion, they were generally more positive towards it. It should be noted that out of the three TESL trainers only one had hands-on experience teaching according to PBLA regulations. The other two, though familiar with PBLA, did not teach according to PBLA instructions as they taught in ESL colleges where the implementation of PBLA was not mandatory. On other issues, it could be said TESL trainers and ESL instructors shared very similar views.

The ESL context in Ontario, as stated earlier is divided into two distinct categories of government-funded where instruction is based on PBLA and private including ESL colleges and language school. Ideally, it would have been very interesting to explore views of two very distinct groups of learners unique to PBLA and non-PBLA contexts. However, for two main reasons, this proved to be less than realistic for both strands in general and surveys in particular. Firstly, a large number of the ESL learners who participated in the study had been exposed to both of the contexts at some point in their language learning experience. In fact, there were some students who attended both

contexts at the same time. Their perceptions of their language learning experience were informed by both contexts and it would have been very difficult for them to divorce their perceptions of one context from another. Mostly, their perceptions were shaped in the form of a conglomeration and served as an overall reflection of their ESL learning experience. Secondly, many of the ESL teachers taught in both contexts. The teaching approaches of these instructors were informed by the requirements of the two contexts. Therefore, some teachers transferred some strategies from one context to another. For example, within the PBLA instruction, teachers are required to perform a needs assessment to help learners set short-, long-term goals. Although this might not be required by private language schools, having realized the benefits of needs assessment, the ESL teachers might transfer this practice to the context. Therefore, drawing a clear distinction for the PBLA and non-PBLA contexts apart from the very distinct practices such as the use of language portfolio was not quite feasible. A thorough elaboration of participants' perceptions on PBLA and its implementation is presented in chapter four of this study.

Having discussed the limitation of analysis, in what comes below, I will present a summary of the findings in qualitative and quantitative strands in response to the research questions.

Summary of the Findings

In response to the first research question asking TESL trainers and ESL instructors about what learner autonomy meant to them, several themes and subthemes were identified. In terms of definitions of the construct of learner autonomy, a variety of

different definitions were suggested. Given their educational background on the subject, TESL trainers were well-versed on notion of learner autonomy. Two out of six ESL teachers struggled with defining the term with the one from the non-PBLA context saying she had not even heard of it. In the case of others the definitions, though varied, were more or less in accordance with the definition presented in the literature. Interestingly, the participants were more comfortable with defining the term autonomous learner. Certain subthemes were identified based on the perceptions of TESL trainers and ESL instructors. These included *definition, goal-setting, decision-making, taking responsibility, investment, individuality/personalization/independence,* and *development of perceptions.* The introduction of PBLA to the ESL context in Ontario has played a major role in TESL trainers and ESL teachers' understanding of learner autonomy to the extent that some of the teachers equated PBLA with learner autonomy. Three major sources of developing such an understanding were cited: PBLA, personal experience, and TESL programs. The teachers who had taught in the PBLA context described it as the most prominent source of information regarding learner autonomy. The study suggests that more needs to be done in TESL programs to familiarize ESL instructors with the construct as TESL programs were mentioned the least among the three sources mentioned above. As it will be discussed later, this calls for systematic training of ESL teachers on the subject.

Goal-setting was considered as a positive practice by the participants from all three groups of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners. Government-funded PBLA language schools require ESL instructors to perform a needs assessment, i.e. goal-setting with the students with the learners. The learners need to maintain these objectives

in their portfolios and the classroom instruction, the tasks and assessments, must all be in accordance with the learners' objectives determined in the needs assessment process. The tasks and assessments must also be aligned to the learners' CLB level. The PBLA context, therefore, mandates the goal-setting procedure to be performed. This, however, is less emphasized in the private language schools where the process is not mandatory. Although, having learned about its benefits, some teachers apply the procedure in their classroom. Yet, as mentioned earlier, in the private context this is not a systematic procedure. The quantitative strand of the study also serves as evidence to this statement, with short-, long-term goal setting items ranking relatively lower in the spectrum as elaborated in chapter 5.

Decision-making was also considered to be very important by the majority of the participants of the study. All TESL trainers voiced their appreciation for the concept. From among ESL instructors, one who was ironically from PBLA context was against it suggesting that students are not aware of what they do not know, and are not even capable of recognizing what would serve them best. The majority of ESL instructors however, were positive about the idea of encouraging learners to make decisions about their learning. Among the ESL learners, almost everyone from both PBLA and non-PBLA contexts welcomed the idea. One ESL learner from the non-PBLA context was against the idea. She found herself incompetent of making decisions about her learning. Yet, in spite of all the positive remarks from all groups about encouraging decision-making in learners, the study suggested that this was not performed much in the classrooms. Six ESL learners out of nine said they were not encouraged to do so. Two were not sure and only one learner responded positive to the question.

All participants were positive about the use of a properly designed and implemented language portfolio with the aim of documenting students' language learning experience. However, the practice was limited to PBLA context. The use of the PBLA portfolio, the Language Companion, was also associated with a great number of controversies due to its own problems discussed in chapter 4. All three ESL learners from PBLA context said they were encouraged to use the portfolio, but none from the non-PBLA context was encouraged or required to do so.

The study suggested that the ESL context in Ontario was divided into two sections of government-funded; PBLA and private; non-PBLA. The introduction of PBLA, and its language portfolio, the Language Companion in the government-funded context has, according to many participants of the study, been a controversial move associated with different shortcomings the most prominent of which was lack of regular, efficient training. PBLA was also criticized for its backwash effect, and disregard for cultural predispositions and being inefficient, controlling, immature, confusing, and demotivating. It was also said that PBLA minimized teacher autonomy and built gaps in learning. The study further suggested some remedies that could help improve the efficiency of PBLA. These remedies included training, flexibility, material development, standardization of rubrics, time and class size. PBLA was acknowledged to offer several advantages including real-world relevance, potential to increase learners' investment in learning, accountability of teachers, and simplicity.

Awareness-raising as an important element of promoting learner autonomy, could have received more attention. When commenting on how learner autonomy could be fostered in the classroom few ESL instructors pointed to raising awareness in learners.

TESL trainers, however, were more aware of its importance. This was also evident in the interviews with ESL learners where, for example six out of nine said they were not taught about different learning styles or encouraged to contemplate them.

An important area largely neglected in both PBLA and non-PBLA contexts was that of self-assessment despite all its benefits including its contribution to reflection as a major principle of the promotion of learner autonomy. Except one ESL learner in the PBLA context, all other eight learners from both PBLA and non-PBLA contexts said their teachers did not encourage self-assessments in their classrooms. Self-assessment, however, was one of the issues which reflected response bias in the quantitative strand of the study where the results were clustered in the average range. ESL instructors were divided on its benefits with one explicitly against it. All three TESL trainers, however, felt positive about encouraging self-assessment in the classroom.

Responses to the second research question on the contribution of developing learner autonomy to learners' language learning experience suggested that the majority of the participants felt very positive about it. All three TESL trainers, five out of six ESL instructors (with one exception from the PBLA context) and eight out of nine ESL learners (with one exception from the non-PBLA context) felt that promotion of learner autonomy would make a positive contribution to learners' language learning experience. Certain subthemes of *motivation, investment, student empowerment, real-life relevance, needs-based teaching/learning* were identified. Likewise, all TESL trainers and the majority of ESL instructors with the exception of two found it desirable to develop learner autonomy. The two exceptions were two ESL instructors in the PBLA context who found it conditional to time limits. All ESL learners with the exception of one in the

non-PBLA context expressed their approval of the concept. The feasibility of promoting learner autonomy however, was regarded with skepticism. Although, all of the TESL trainers and ESL instructors except one ESL instructor in the PBLA context said it was feasible, almost all of the responses were shadowed with conditions because of challenges. The challenges were identified to be of two major groups of organizational and individual barriers. Organizational barriers included *time, class size, requirements, material, school policies,* and *resources.* Individual barriers included *learner resistance, self-efficacy beliefs,* and *cultural differences.*

The next section elaborates on the final research question on teachers' roles and a summary of the findings in the qualitative and quantitative strands of the study along the merging of the two strands.

Merging Qualitative and Quantitative Results

Different themes were identified in the qualitative and quantitative strands of the study. In the qualitative strand, three major roles of *facilitator, motivator,* and *counselor* were identified. The analysis of data in the quantitative strand led to the development of four roles of *classroom organizer, study guide, learning regulator,* and *resource facilitator.* As mentioned earlier, different roles can be assumed for/by teachers in an environment that encourages learner autonomy. These roles may correspond and even overlap to some extent. The differentiation between the roles is not necessarily black or white. Rather, these roles may coexist in a continuum of roles assumed by teachers who aim at promoting learner autonomy. Below I will

describe the correspondence between the roles which evolved through the qualitative and quantitative strands of the study.

Facilitator-Classroom organizer/learning regulator, and resource facilitator correspondence. The role of facilitator surfacing in the qualitative strand of the study corresponds with three roles of classroom organizer/learning regulator, and resource facilitator in the quantitative strand. Facilitator, which was the most frequent theme in the qualitative strand covered a variety of roles. A facilitator is a person who facilitates autonomous learning by taking measures necessary to that end. These measures include organizing students into pairs and groups, organizing debates, assigning presentations, etc. (Classroom organizer), encouraging extracurricular activities, encouraging reflection on the learning process, evaluating students, encouraging peer- and self-assessment, motivating the students, etc. (Learning regulator), introducing and encouraging the use of online resources, newspapers, magazines, news, reference books, etc. (Resource facilitator).

Motivator- Learning regulator correspondence. Motivator was another theme which surfaced in the course of the interviews with participants of the study. It corresponds with learning regulator and study guide in the quantitative strand. The role of the teacher as a motivator is to increase motivation in learners, help learners gain confidence in learning English through encouragement, and mitigate negative affective factors such as anxiety, nervousness and shyness, etc. (Learning regulator).

Counselor-Study guide correspondence. Counselor as yet another recurring theme as a role of teachers aiming at promoting learner autonomy corresponds with study guide in the quantitative strand. The counselor provides learners with consultation on their learning issues. The counselor communicates with learners and detects their difficulties in learning English,

discusses with learners their strengths and weaknesses, encourages and helps learners to set short- and long-term goals, follows up with learners to pursue their goals, and helps students learn about learning strategies and styles.

Conclusions

A review of the analyses of the findings in the Qualitative and Quantitative strands of the study suggests the following conclusions:

- Both strands suggest that teachers play multiple roles with regards to the promotion of learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. Teachers' roles are not limited to the singular transmission role where the teacher imparts knowledge to his/her students.
- Qualitative and quantitative strands of the study help identify certain corresponding themes of facilitator, motivator, and counselor (qualitative) and classroom organizer, study guide, learning regulator, and resource facilitator (quantitative). These roles correspond as facilitator-classroom organizer/ learning regulator/ resource facilitator, motivator- learning regulator, and counselor-study guide.
- The roles assumed by teachers are significantly different with the role as resource facilitator ranking significantly smaller than classroom organizer, study guide, and learning regulator. This is while the other three, although different in terms of ranking with classroom organizer being first followed by study guide and learning regulator, do not differ significantly.
- The ESL context in Ontario is heavily affected by whether the system falls within the government-funded ESL program LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to

Canada) or the private sector. The government-funded ESL programs are required to follow a specific model of teaching, i.e. Portfolio-Based Language Assessment designed explicitly to promote learner autonomy. Therefore, teachers' roles are more systemic as teachers are required to follow PBLA instructions. The adult private ESL context in Ontario is less systemic as language schools develop and follow their own curricula which shape teachers' roles.

- A thorough analysis of the findings of the study suggests that under the current circumstances, PBLA has failed to satisfy the majority of ESL teachers required to teach according to the PBLA instructions for a variety of reasons discussed in this study. ESL learners also had very mixed feelings about PBLA with the majority being negative. The study finds that, although PBLA was designed to promote learner autonomy as one of its primary objectives, certain issues have impeded the realization of its goal.
- The study suggests that a very strong majority of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners welcome the promotion of learner autonomy. Also, a strong majority of the teachers felt they assumed roles that helped promote learner autonomy in their classrooms.

Implications for practice

Proper Teacher Training. The study of ESL teachers` perceptions of learner autonomy suggested that although a number of teachers were very well-versed on the concept of learner autonomy, there is a significant number of teachers who might not be familiar with the concept of learner autonomy. Without adequate knowledge, teachers cannot be expected to successfully promote learner autonomy in their classrooms. Besides developing a proper

understanding of the concept, teachers need to learn how they can actually promote learner autonomy in their classroom. The study revealed that teachers had learned about learner autonomy primarily from three major sources of PBLA, personal experience, and teacher training programs. PBLA was the most frequent theme for teachers who had taught in the system. The second most frequent theme was personal experience, followed by teacher training programs as the last recurring theme. This understanding calls for action in teacher training programs. TESL training programs need to incorporate learner autonomy in their courses. PBLA as another source of developing teachers' perceptions has been an effort in promoting learner autonomy in the government-funded ESL program, but due to certain issues discussed earlier, it has not yet succeeded to satisfy the majority of ESL teachers and ESL students. A major issue with the PBLA also, is that of training. Indeed, along with certain issues and challenges, lack of proper training may be factored into PBLA's relative failure. Although recently there have been webinars and workshops held in different language schools across the province, they have not been systematic. Language schools should provide their staff with practical training that can equip the teachers with a proper understanding of the concept of learner autonomy and the strategies that can help promote autonomy in learners. Many participants in the study urged the need for training. As mentioned in chapter four of this study, with regards to the PBLA for instance, one of the ESL teachers said that after asking eight different ESL teachers, she received eight different responses. Many teachers seem to be confused about what to do and how to promote learner autonomy in learners. There are different interpretations of the PBLA principles among ESL teachers. Another teacher complained that she should not have been hired without being fully trained on the subject. There were also comments suggesting that some teachers had observed other teachers' performances and they did not deem their method of instruction in

accordance with the principles of PBLA. It would seem rational for the confusion of teachers to be transmitted to the students who are additionally challenged with language barriers in turn. Instructions about becoming autonomous have to be given to the students who at certain levels find language barriers a real challenge. Should the teachers lack clarity on the subject, they cannot be expected to provide their students with proper guidance. Admittedly, two of the TESL trainers both from the non-PBLA context stated that promoting learner autonomy was not explicitly taught in their courses, but was rather embedded in the course material as a general theme. The other TESL trainer was a PBLA lead instructor at a LINC center who explicitly taught PBLA to ESL instructors. All three TESL trainers felt it was necessary to include promoting learner autonomy in TESL programs.

Holec (2009) says to be able to promote learner autonomy teachers need to be trained in two major areas: "learner educator" and "materials provider" (Holec, 2009, pp. 38-9). Holec describes the teacher training program as:

Learner educator

- *Training to help learners become aware of their representations, discover up-to-date information on language and language learning, and modify existing representations or acquire new ones as necessary.*
- *Training to define and implement practice activities that will develop learners' self-direction skills.*
- *Special training to assume counseling functions in situations of assisted self-direction of learning.*

Materials provider

- *Detailed information on the types and specific characteristics of the tools to be made available to the learner.*
- *Training in the use of different media and technologies that will be exploited.*
- *Practical work on how to produce robust learning materials*

(Holec, 2009, pp. 38-40)

The study suggests that ESL programs in general and those aiming at promoting learner autonomy, in particular, would benefit from considering what follows:

Decision-making. To foster learner autonomy, learners should be encouraged to make decisions about their learning. Indeed, on a number of occasions, the participants of the study, TESL trainers, and ESL teachers equated learner autonomy with the ability to make decisions about one's learning. ESL learners also said they would enjoy having the luxury of making decisions about their learning. Regarding the status quo in Ontario's ESL context, the study suggested that more autonomy could be granted to the students. When asked if their teachers encouraged them to make decisions about their learning six out of nine ESL learners responded negatively. Two said partially and only one learner definitively stated that she was encouraged to make decisions about her learning. This is while learner autonomy by definition is about learners taking charge of their learning. In order to take charge of one's learning, learners should be able to make decisions about their education. One of the issues with PBLA is that although it tries to involve learners in their learning through encouraging them to set short- and long-term goals, at times it runs counter to the spirit of learner autonomy because the learners are not fully in charge of deciding over certain issues. Learners still are required to follow the rubric dictated by PBLA. According to the study, if an approach is not considered PBLA, it cannot be implemented in the classroom even if it is what the learners want.

Goal-setting. Setting short- and long-term goals was among the most highlighted, frequent themes throughout the study. The majority of all three groups of participants, TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners highly favored setting goals by the learners. One of the positive features of the PBLA practiced in the government-funded programs is its emphasis on goal-setting. PBLA requires teachers to perform a needs-assessment with learners. Based on their needs, learners set short- and long-term goals and discuss their goals with their peers and teacher. The teacher is then required to design tasks geared to learners' needs. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the private sector. Goal-setting in the non-PBLA ESL context is not as highly emphasized. Although the quantitative strand of the study suggests that teachers to some extent perform some form of goal setting, it is by no means systemic in the private ESL context. Also, compared to other measures of promoting learner autonomy according to the analysis of the quantitative data of the study, goal-setting ranks below the average. Therefore, it can be said that for those involved in the private ESL context including administrators, TESL trainers and ESL instructors, this is an important issue to consider. The qualitative data also confirms this. The majority of ESL learners who studied in the non-PBLA system said they were not encouraged to perform goal-setting in their classrooms.

Awareness raising/Counseling. To successfully promote learner autonomy, for learners to become autonomous and to be able to take charge of their learning, teachers as counselors should provide learners with an understanding of different learning strategies and styles. Learners should become conscious of their learning, strategies and approaches they use and those which they have at their disposal. Providing learners with such metacognition will further their involvement in their learning experience. Teachers as counselors need to discuss with learners their weaknesses and strengths. The analysis of the study suggested that more

needs to be done in this regard. Although awareness raising was identified as an emerging theme in the interviews with ESL instructors and TESL trainers, it was less frequently highlighted as contrasted with other emerging themes. The interviews with students also confirmed this. Only three students out of nine said their teachers provided them with information about learning strategies. Furthermore, counseling is not performed consistently. Some schools have specific sessions dedicated to counseling. In some schools, these sessions are mandatory while in some they are voluntary. Many schools do not provide any such sessions. In those schools, counseling, if any, is limited to classroom procedures. Given that the participants who had counseling sessions were in favor of such sessions, language schools may find it beneficial for their learners to offer such sessions.

Self-assessment. Self-assessment has been rightfully described as a fundamental constituent in promoting learner autonomy. It gets learners involved in their learning through reflection and progress checks. The European Language Portfolio, Canadian Language Benchmarks, and the Portfolio-Based Language Assessment have incorporated it for the advantages it offers. The literature on self-assessment is rife with its benefits to the learner. Yet, the study suggests that self-assessment in not widely used in Ontario's ESL context. Eight out of nine ESL students (3 PBLA, 6 non-PBLA) interviewed said they were not encouraged to perform self-assessment with the one exception from the non-PBLA context. Some ESL instructors also did not find it useful or did not see the need for it. The quantitative analysis of the study finds self-assessment around average. Teacher training programs may find it beneficial to inform teachers of the benefits of self-assessment especially with regards to the promotion of learner autonomy.

Resource facilitator. The advancements of technology, mobile devices, the internet, etc. offers the learners with the numerous possibilities to become autonomous. Teachers should facilitate this by encouraging learners to use online resources and websites along with learning opportunities they have at their disposal. The quantitative strand of the study suggested that the role of the teacher as resource facilitator ranked significantly lower than other roles. If learners are to develop autonomy, they should know about resources which will benefit them for their learning purposes and how to use them properly. Teachers as resource facilitators should be able to provide learners with proper guidance about useful resources and the proper use of those resources.

Documenting learning, Language portfolio. If not the most effective tool for promoting learner autonomy, a language portfolio is certainly one of the most important ones. It provides the learners with an instrument to document their learning, learning objectives, preliminary proficiency assessment, progress, assessments and evaluations, etc. The findings of the study suggest that Ontario's ESL context is divided into two sections of PBLA and non-PBLA. The non-PBLA section includes private language schools and colleges. The study suggests that ESL learners in the non-PBLA context are not encouraged by their teachers to use a language portfolio. In fact, when interviewed, most of the ESL learners were not even familiar with the concept of the language portfolio. This is while a substantial majority of participants, TESL trainers, ESL teachers, and ESL learners, acknowledged the benefits of a properly designed language portfolio. The use of a language portfolio may, therefore, prove very beneficial for those involved in ESL teaching/learning. Note, however, should be taken that it is essential for the language portfolio to be properly designed and implemented. Otherwise, it might prove counterproductive. The PBLA system requires learners to use a language portfolio,

the Language Companion. The findings of the study suggest that owing to its design and implementation, the Language Companion is highly controversial. Both ESL instructors and ESL teachers have very mixed feelings about it with the majority being negative. The participants of the study criticized PBLA/the Language Companion for being inefficient, controlling, immature, confusing, and demotivating. PBLA was also criticized for minimizing teacher autonomy, building gaps in learning, its backwash effect and disregard for cultural predispositions. For a thorough elaboration of the problems associated with the Language Companion please refer to chapter four of the study where a detailed account of reforms has been presented.

Material development.

***Language portfolio*.** Besides the curriculum teaching/learning materials, to foster learner autonomy as mentioned earlier, learners would benefit from a properly designed and applied language portfolio. According to the findings of the study, a successful language portfolio should have the following features:

- Flexibility: the language portfolio should not be too controlling. It should neither stifle teacher nor learner autonomy. This is among the major problems that ESL teachers and learners find with PBLA and the Language Companion. According to some of the ESL teachers, under the current circumstances, anything which is deemed not in accordance with PBLA should be removed and cannot be included in the Language Companion even if the teacher or the learners find it useful.
- Standardization: If teaching is to be task-based as is the case with PBLA, standardized resource materials can be devised for a variety of tasks. Another major problem teachers currently find with PBLA and the Language Companion is that under the current circumstances, teachers have to produce materials both for tasks and tests. This could

entail two major risks. Firstly, providing the material demands a lot of time on the part of the teacher which could lead to a compromise of otherwise useful time. Secondly, not every teacher is qualified for developing materials. This may lead to homogeneity and advancement issues. Providing teachers and learners with standardized materials and rubrics would prove beneficial.

Logistics; Time & Class size. As discussed in chapter 4, two major problems with the application of PBLA and the Language Companion in many classes in Ontario's ESL context according to the participants of the study were time and class size. A system similar to PBLA that aims at promoting learner autonomy by nature demands a considerable amount of time. Also, given the amount of counseling and one-on-one interaction the teachers and students need to have, large classrooms will prove to be problematic. The majority of teacher participants of the study described classes with a maximum number of 12 students, ideal for the promotion of learner autonomy. This is not to say that it would be impossible to promote learner autonomy in larger classrooms. It is rather the issue of efficiency. If possible, language schools will benefit from dividing their larger classes to smaller ones.

Summary

In chapter 6 I presented a combination of the findings of the qualitative and quantitative strands to provide a comprehensive understanding of the roles currently assumed by ESL teachers in Ontario's ESL context with regards to the promotion of learner autonomy. I first presented a concise account of teachers' roles in promoting learner autonomy and then recapitulated the findings of both quantitative and qualitative strands. Next, I elaborated on the correspondence between the themes emerging in the qualitative and quantitative strands of the

study. Finally, based on a thorough analysis of the findings of the study, I presented implications for practice which can be applied with the aim of promoting learner autonomy in ESL learners.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

As the conclusion of the study, Chapter 7 includes the purpose the study, the summary of the major findings, limitations, the summary of pedagogical implications, and research implications.

Purpose

Having evolved into more than a buzzword in second language education, efforts have been made worldwide to incorporate the promotion of learner autonomy in second language instruction. Language schools in numerous countries from around the world have adopted measures to that end. Certain documents have been developed to facilitate promotion of learner autonomy, including The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) and European Language Portfolio (ELP). In Canada Manitoba Collaborative Language Portfolio Assessment (CLPA) was concocted and phased in from 2005 to 2008. Expectations were standardized in 2009, the CLPA Binder Divider was introduced, and the CLPA: Manitoba Best Practices Guide was revised. Very recently, based on the previous Assessment for Learning (AFL) modules, Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) was developed and introduced in Ontario. Training began early 2014 and it has since been phased into government-funded ESL programs. The application of PBLA has become mandatory in government-funded ESL programs including Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), but for the most part, the private ESL sector uses their own curricula, teaching and learning paradigms.

The purpose of this research was to investigate TESL trainers', ESL teachers' and ESL learners' perceptions of promoting learner autonomy, its desirability, feasibility and challenges and the roles teachers assume to that end in Ontario's ESL context. Since PBLA has been introduced in Ontario's ESL context as a measure to foster learner autonomy, the study also incorporated a thorough analysis based on the perceptions of the participants of the study to investigate its extent of success.

Significance of the Study

Since its introduction, learner autonomy has intrigued those involved with second language education across the world. The abstract nature of the construct of learner autonomy resulting in a certain level of subjectivity of interpretations surrounding its definition has led to the emergence of a variety of different theories and practices in second language education. Numerous states across the world have adopted measures to promote learner autonomy in ESL/EFL contexts. As I mentioned earlier, Canada, the province of Ontario, in particular, has fairly recently joined the club. The investment in shaping a method to promote learner autonomy in the context among its other primary goals resulted in the introduction and application of PBLA in the government-funded ESL context. The present study presents a comprehensive portrayal of the perceptions about the promotion of learner autonomy in the context. Several features contribute to the uniqueness of the study. Firstly, it includes a thorough analysis of participants' perceptions of both the promotion of learner autonomy and PBLA. Therefore, it is not limited to either one of the two constructs. Merely claiming a concept to be a primary objective of an enterprise does not necessarily mean that the two are the same or that the objective has been materialized. That is the purpose of the current research. It presents the reader with an understanding of the participants' perceptions of promoting learner autonomy in the

context, PBLA, and whether PBLA has been successful in achieving its goals. Secondly, to present a comprehensive picture, the study does not limit itself to one specific group of those involved in ESL context, but includes three groups of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners. It is the researcher's' belief that a conglomeration of perceptions of the groups mentioned above not divorced from each other would yield comprehensive results as these groups reciprocally affect each other. Thirdly, the culturally diverse texture of Ontario and the cultural predisposition of individuals in relation to the promotion of learner autonomy as discussed in this study make it a unique feature as it affects the perceptions of those involved.

Procedures

The study was conducted using a mixed methods research framework. Two strands of qualitative and quantitative were used to study participants' perceptions. In the qualitative strand, a total of eighteen participants were recruited from multiple ESL sites in Ontario. The participants included three TESL trainers, six, ESL instructors and nine ESL learners. The participants participated in semi-structured interviews specifically tailored for each group. The findings were analyzed and discussed within the qualitative domain. In the quantitative strand, a total of 114 ESL learners were recruited from multiple sites across Ontario. Participants responded to a survey designed to study ESL learners' perceptions of teachers' roles vis-a-vis the promotion of learner autonomy. Descriptive and inferential statistics were analyzed and discussed. Finally, qualitative and quantitative results were merged to present a comprehensive response.

Summary of the Findings

- The majority of the study participants, i.e. TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners welcomed the promotion of learner autonomy. Promoting learner autonomy was considered as highly desirable. Certain challenges, however, made the feasibility less realistic. Challenges to the promotion of learner autonomy included organizational and individual barriers each with sub-themes. In terms of organizational challenges, the sub-themes of time, class size, requirements, material, school policies, and resources were identified. The individual challenges included learner resistance, self-efficacy beliefs, and cultural differences.

- TESL trainers' and ESL teachers' perceptions of the construct of learner autonomy varied. The introduction of Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) as a measure to promote learner autonomy had divided Ontario's ESL context into PBLA and non-PBLA. The government-funded ESL programs were required to apply PBLA instruction. The participants' understanding of learner autonomy was heavily affected by whether they were in the PBLA or non-PBLA context. However, there was a general consensus on certain themes. These themes included learners' taking charge of their learning, goal-setting, decision-making, awareness-raising, and investment in learning.

- Three major sources of PBLA, personal experience, and TESL training were identified by TESL trainers and ESL teachers as the vectors that helped shape their understanding of learner autonomy with TESL training ranking as the lowest.

- Most of ESL teachers felt they promoted learner autonomy in their classrooms to some extent. The claim, however, was not fully supported by ESL learners.

- Teachers assumed multiple distinct roles with regards to the promotion of language learner autonomy. These roles included facilitator-classroom organizer/ learning regulator/ resource facilitator, motivator- learning regulator, and counselor-study guide.
- Teachers' role as resource facilitator ranked significantly smaller than other roles.
- Due to certain challenges and complications, PBLA has failed to satisfy the majority of ESL instructors and ESL learners.
- While offering certain advantages including real world relevance, potential to increase learners' investment in their learning, simplification of objectives, and accountability of the teachers, under current circumstances PBLA and its binder, the Language Companion, were criticized for being inefficient, controlling, raw, confusing, and demotivating. PBLA was also criticized for minimizing teacher autonomy, building gaps in learning, its backwash effect and disregard for cultural predispositions.
- The majority of the participants felt a properly designed and applied language portfolio not only would serve as a useful tool for promoting learner autonomy but would have a positive impact on learners' language learning experience in general.
- The study found that the government-funded ESL context in Canada had changed dramatically as a result of the introduction and implementation of PBLA. The non-PBLA context had not seen such a drastic change but according to some of the participants was about to change to accommodate the promotion of learner autonomy.

Implications for Practice, Summary

Investigating participants' perceptions of the promotion of learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context, the study provides certain implications for practice. A thorough elaboration of these implications is presented in Chapter 6. In summary, the findings of the study highlight the importance of proper, practical teacher training. Promotion of learner of autonomy as discussed in the study demands its own strategies. Lack of adequate knowledge on the subject can lead to misinterpretations and confusion. The criticisms targeting PBLA are, in part, waged as a result of misunderstanding its dynamics. The confusion on the part of the teacher will then degenerate into less than a pleasant situation in the classroom. Teachers, therefore, need to be well trained on the promotion of learner autonomy. Besides teacher training, ESL programs also will benefit from paying specific attention to different areas of awareness-raising, counseling, decision-making, goal-setting, self-assessment, teacher as a resource facilitator, multiple roles of the teacher, documenting learning/language portfolio, time, and class size. As detailed in Chapter 6, a combination of the modifications to the system can lead to positive results.

Study Limitations

Certain limitations were experienced in the course of the study. These limitations, however, did not in any shape or form tarnish the results and/or the validity of the study as they were foreseen by the researcher. Three major limitations were identified.

Quantitative strand. The study aimed at investigating TESL trainers', ESL instructors', and ESL learners' perceptions of promoting learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. To that end, given its advantages as discussed in Chapter 4, a mixed methods research design was employed. However, due to recruiting limitations, I decided to perform the survey with ESL learners only. If not impossible, it would have been extremely difficult to recruit the

required number of ESL instructors and even more so TESL trainers to yield adequate statistical power for the quantitative strand of the study. The limitation, however, was ameliorated by the fact that the present study is qualitative dominant. The qualitative strand of the study does, in fact, provide an in-depth understanding of research questions.

Sample size. The sample size was an issue even with the ESL learners who participated in the quantitative strand of the study. 114 ESL learners were recruited for the study. It is my assumption that a larger sample size would yield more statistical power, especially with principal component analysis as a part of the quantitative strand of the study.

Observation. It is my belief that the study would have largely benefitted from including observations of ESL classrooms in both PBLA and non-PBLA contexts. However, given the time and resources I had at my disposal, this would have proved to be almost impossible. To have an understanding of the current status of promoting learner autonomy in Ontario's context based on observation, it would have taken a strenuous longitudinal study with the affordance of observing numerous ESL classrooms over extended periods of time. This was deemed beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, the in-depth insight obtained from the participants' perceptions, provided a comprehensive understanding of the study objectives.

Implications for Research

The present study provides the reader with an understanding of the current status of the promotion of learner autonomy in Ontario's context. It takes into account the perceptions of the three groups of TESL trainers, ESL instructors, and ESL learners. Certain limitations were experienced in the course of study. The possible removal of these limitations in future research could shed more light on the research questions raised in this study.

Observation. Provided with adequate resources, observations can be held to investigate the current status of the promotion of learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. As suggested by this study, the ESL teachers interviewed believed that they implemented measures that helped develop autonomous learners. While in this research, the learners' responses were studied to investigate teachers' claims, longitudinal observations of classrooms can provide a valuable understanding of class dynamics. Through observations, researchers can discover whether teachers actually promote learner autonomy in their classrooms and if so, what strategies do they use to that end, and whether this is a systemic pattern or sporadic, isolated occurrences.

Comparative study. Being divided into two distinct contexts of PBLA and non-PBLA as a result of the implementation of the system in the government-funded ESL programs as an attempt to promote learner autonomy, specifically designed studies can compare learner achievements in the two contexts to investigate the success rate of PBLA. Given the huge investments in government-funded ESL programs in Ontario, it would prove very valuable to understand how successful the system has been. The current study presents an understanding of the problems associated with the PBLA system based on the perceptions of the participants involved and offers some remedies to address those issues. Such comparative studies with solid valid and reliable results can prove very valuable to both government-funded and private ESL contexts in Ontario.

Kaleidoscopic scope. Certain factors including gender, age, culture, and proficiency level among others may influence individuals' perceptions of learner autonomy. As depicted by this study, cultural predispositions play an important role in how receptive learners are with regards to developing learner autonomy. It would prove of value to investigate the impact such factors and whether the level of intervention, if any, is significant.

Concluding Remarks

The ESL context in Ontario, Canada with the highest number of immigrants compared to any other province in the country (53.3%), as detailed in the introduction, is of especial importance. Language proficiency as a prerequisite for a variety of vital purposes including employment and higher education is one of the primary needs of a great number of immigrants in Canada. ESL is also considered as a gateway to higher education, colleges and universities with international students heading to Canada for education purposes. Efforts have been made to further improve the quality of ESL classrooms. The recent introduction and implementation of PBLA as a measure to promote learner autonomy has been a major step to that end. This study presents a comprehensive portrayal of the current status of the promotion of language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. It investigates the TESL trainers, ESL instructors', and ESL learners' perceptions of learner autonomy both in PBLA and non-PBLA contexts. It delves into the PBLA instruction, exposes its shortcomings in practice, and offers remedies to improve the situation. The study further reveals directions for future research in the field.

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Appendices

Appendix A Letter of Information & Consent Form (TESL trainers)

Language Learner Autonomy in English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) Contexts

Letter of Information for TESL trainers

Dear Participant

You are being invited to participate in this research study on the development of Language Learner Autonomy in ESL/EFL contexts. Being qualified for the study, your participation will be highly appreciated as it provides the study with valuable data.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

Who are the Investigators?

Julie Byrd Clark, PhD	Faculty of Education Western University	[redacted]
Alireza Mousavi Arfae, PhD Candidate	Faculty of Education Western University	[redacted]

What is the Purpose of This Study?

Based on the perceptions of ESL/EFL teacher trainers, teachers and learners the research aims at studying the current status of the development of language learner autonomy in ESL/EFL contexts.

Adult ESL/EFL teacher trainers, teachers and learners are eligible to participate in this study. Individuals who are not adult ESL/EFL teacher trainers, teachers and learners are not eligible to participate in this study and therefore will be excluded from the study.

What Will Happen in this Study?

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked participate in a one-time interview which will last about 30 minutes. The interview will take place either in your institute at your convenience or via Skype. Participation is voluntary and you are not obliged to answer all of the questions. It is anticipated that the entire task will take maximum 25 minutes.
Please note that the interviews will be audio-recorded as a requirement of the study. Please also bear in mind that all data would be absolutely confidential, and that your name will not be used if the study is published.

Compensation

You will be compensated for your participation in this study. If you do not complete the entire study you will still be compensated. ESL/EFL teacher trainers who participate in the interview receive a 15-dollar gift card.

Possible Risks and Harms

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

Possible Benefits

Information gathered provides an in-depth comprehensive understanding of the current status of the development of language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. Such an understanding will benefit ESL/EFL material developers, teacher trainers, teachers, and learners.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future academic status.

Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If the results are published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. The data collected from the study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the Faculty of Education building and on a secured computer drive. The data will be kept on file for a period of five years after the completion of the study at which time it will be destroyed.
Please bear in mind that the representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Dr. Julie Byrd Clark, Telephone: [redacted] / E-mail: [redacted]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact [redacted]

Please note that if the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please provide your name and contact number on a piece of paper separate from the Consent Form.
Also, please note that you do not waive any legal rights by participating in this research.

Language Learner Autonomy in ESL/EFL Contexts

Julie Byrd Clark, PhD

Alireza Mousavi Arfae, PhD Candidate

Western University

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ESL/EFL college/school/center: _____

Email address (please print): _____

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B Letter of Information & Consent Form (**ESL Instructors)**

Language Learner Autonomy in English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) Contexts

Letter of Information for ESL/EFL Teachers

Dear Participant

You are being invited to participate in this research study on the development of Language Learner Autonomy in ESL/EFL contexts. Being qualified for the study, your participation will be highly appreciated as it provides the study with valuable data.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

Who are the Investigators?

Julie Byrd Clark, PhD	Faculty of Education Western University	[redacted]
Alireza Mousavi Arfae, PhD Candidate	Faculty of Education Western University	[redacted]

What is the Purpose of This Study?

Based on the perceptions of ESL/EFL teacher trainers, teachers and learners the research aims at studying the current status of the development of language learner autonomy in ESL/EFL contexts.

Adult ESL/EFL teacher trainers, teachers and learners are eligible to participate in this study. Individuals who are not adult ESL/EFL teacher trainers, teachers and learners are not eligible to participate in this study and therefore will be excluded from the study.

What Will Happen in this Study?

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked participate in a one-time interview which will last about 30 minutes. The interview will take place either in your institute at your convenience or via Skype. Participation is voluntary and you are not obliged to answer all of the questions. It is anticipated that the entire task will take maximum 25 minutes.
Please note that the interviews will be audio-recorded as a requirement of the study. Please also bear in mind that all data would be absolutely confidential, and that your name will not be used if the study is published.

Compensation

You will be compensated for your participation in this study. If you do not complete the entire study you will still be compensated. ESL/EFL teacher trainers who participate in the interview receive a 15-dollar gift card.

Possible Risks and Harms

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

Possible Benefits

Information gathered provides an in-depth comprehensive understanding of the current status of the development of language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. Such an understanding will benefit ESL/EFL material developers, teacher trainers, teachers, and learners.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future academic status.

Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If the results are published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. The data collected from the study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the Faculty of Education building and on a secured computer drive. The data will be kept on file for a period of five years after the completion of the study at which time it will be destroyed.
Please bear in mind that the representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Dr. Julie Byrd Clark, Telephone [redacted] / E-mail: [redacted]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact [redacted]

Please note that if the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please provide your name and contact number on a piece of paper separate from the Consent Form.
Also, please note that you do not waive any legal rights by participating in this research.

Language Learner Autonomy in English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) Contexts

Julie Byrd Clark, PhD

Alireza Mousavi Arfae, PhD Candidate

Western University

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ESL/EFL college/school/center: _____

Email address (please print): _____

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C Letter of Information & Consent Form (**ESL learners, interview)**

Language Learner Autonomy in English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) Contexts

Letter of Information for ESL Learners (Interview)

Dear Participant

You are being invited to participate in this research study on the development of Language Learner Autonomy in ESL/EFL contexts. Being qualified for the study, your participation will be highly appreciated as it provides the study with valuable data.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

Who are the Investigators?

Julie Byrd Clark, PhD	Faculty of Education Western University	[redacted]
Alireza Mousavi Arfae, PhD Candidate	Faculty of Education Western University	[redacted]

What is the Purpose of This Study?

Based on the perceptions of ESL/EFL teacher trainers, teachers and learners the research aims at studying the current status of the development of language learner autonomy in ESL/EFL contexts.

Adult ESL/EFL teacher trainers, teachers and learners are eligible to participate in this study. Individuals who are not adult ESL/EFL teacher trainers, teachers and learners in Ontario are not eligible to participate in this study and therefore will be excluded from the study.

What Will Happen in this Study?

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to take part in a survey. Participation is voluntary and you are not obliged to answer all of the questions on the questionnaire. It is anticipated that the entire task will take maximum fifteen minutes, over one session in your class. Upon the completion of the questionnaire, you will be invited to participate in a one-time interview which will last about 30 minutes. The interview will take place either in your institute at your convenience or via Skype.
Please note that the interviews will be audio-recorded as a requirement of the study. Please also bear in mind that all data would be absolutely confidential, and that your name will not be used if the study is published.

Compensation

You will be compensated for your participation in this study. If you do not complete the entire study you will still be compensated. ESL/EFL learners participating in the survey will receive a 5-dollar gift card. ESL/EFL learners who participate in the interview receive a 15-dollar gift card.

Possible Risks and Harms

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.
Possible Benefits

Information gathered provides an in-depth comprehensive understanding of the current status of the development of language learner autonomy in ESL/EFL contexts. Such an understanding will benefit ESL/EFL material developers, teacher trainers, teachers, and learners.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future academic status.

Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If the results are published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. The data collected from the study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the Faculty of Education building and on a secured computer drive. The data will be kept on file for a period of five years after the completion of the study at which time it will be destroyed.
Please bear in mind that the representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the

study you may contact Dr. Julie Byrd Clark, Telephone [redacted] E-mail:

[redacted]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact [redacted]

Please note that if the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please provide your name and contact number on a piece of paper separate from the Consent Form.
Also, please note that you do not waive any legal rights by participating in this research.

Language Learner Autonomy in English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) Contexts

Julie Byrd Clark, PhD

Alireza Mousavi Arfae, PhD Candidate

Western University

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ESL/EFL college/school/center: _____

Email address (please print): _____

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D : Letter of Information & Consent Form (**ESL learners, survey)**

Language Learner Autonomy in English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) Contexts

Letter of Information for ESL Learners (Survey)

Dear Participant

You are being invited to participate in this research study on the development of Language Learner Autonomy in ESL/EFL contexts. Being qualified for the study, your participation will be highly appreciated as it provides the study with valuable data.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

Who are the Investigators?

Julie Byrd Clark, PhD	Faculty of Education Western University	[redacted]
Alireza Mousavi Arfae, PhD Candidate	Faculty of Education Western University	[redacted]

What is the Purpose of This Study?

Based on the perceptions of ESL/EFL teacher trainers, teachers and learners the research aims at studying the current status of the development of language learner autonomy in ESL/EFL contexts .

Adult ESL/EFL teacher trainers, teachers and learners are eligible to participate in this study. Individuals who are not adult ESL/EFL teacher trainers, teachers and learners in Ontario are not eligible to participate in this study and therefore will be excluded from the study.

What Will Happen in this Study?

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to take part in a survey. Participation is voluntary and you are not obliged to answer all of the questions on the questionnaire. It is anticipated that the entire task will take maximum fifteen minutes, over one session in your class. Upon the completion of the questionnaire, you will be invited to participate in a one-time interview which will last about 30 minutes. The interview will take place either in your institute at your convenience or via Skype.
Please note that the interviews will be audio-recorded as a requirement of the study. Please also bear in mind that all data would be absolutely confidential, and that your name will not be used if the study is published.

Compensation

You will be compensated for your participation in this study. If you do not complete the entire study you will still be compensated. ESL/EFL learners participating in the survey will receive a 5-dollar gift card. ESL/EFL learners who participate in the interview receive a 15-dollar gift card.

Possible Risks and Harms

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.
Possible Benefits

Information gathered provides an in-depth comprehensive understanding of the current status of the development of language learner autonomy in ESL/EFL contexts. Such an understanding will benefit ESL/EFL material developers, teacher trainers, teachers, and learners.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future academic status.

Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If the results are published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. The data collected from the study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the Faculty of Education building and on a secured computer drive. The data will be kept on file for a period of five years after the completion of the study at which time it will be destroyed.
Please bear in mind that the representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Dr. Julie Byrd Clark, Telephone: [redacted] E-mail: [redacted]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact [redacted]

Please note that if the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please provide your name and contact number on a piece of paper separate from the Consent Form.
Also, please note that you do not waive any legal rights by participating in this research.

Language Learner Autonomy in English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) Contexts

Julie Byrd Clark, PhD

Alireza Mousavi Arfae, PhD Candidate

Western University

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ESL/EFL college/school/center: _____

Email address (please print): _____

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E ESL Learners' Questionnaire

Statement	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1. My English teacher communicates with us and learns about our difficulties in learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My English teacher helps us make short-term English study plans.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My English teacher helps us make medium-and-long term English study plans.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My English teacher tells us about English learning strategies and methods in class.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My English teacher organizes group work in class.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My English teacher organizes pair work in class.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My English teacher organizes English debates in class.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My English teacher assigns us to prepare English presentations on a particular topic after class and give them in class.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My English teacher assigns us to prepare English short plays after class and present them in class.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My English teacher encourages us to do peer study after class.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My English teacher encourages us to make use of online resources	1	2	3	4	5
12. My English teacher encourages us to listen to English news after class.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My English teacher encourages us to read English newspapers and magazines after class.	1	2	3	4	5

14. My English teacher recommends useful English reference books.	1	2	3	4	5
15. My English teacher recommends useful websites about English study.	1	2	3	4	5
16. My English teacher joins our English activity, such as English Week, English debates and English speaking contests.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My English teacher opens up public channels for communication, such as public e-mail account.	1	2	3	4	5
18. My English teacher encourages us to reflect on our learning process.	1	2	3	4	5
19. My English teacher checks and evaluates our English study at regular intervals.	1	2	3	4	5
20. My English teacher encourages us to make self-assessment.	1	2	3	4	5
21. My English teacher encourages students to give peer assessment.	1	2	3	4	5
22. My English teacher can motivate my interest in learning English well.	1	2	3	4	5
23. My English teacher can help me gain my confidence in learning English well by praising or encourage me.	1	2	3	4	5
24. My English teacher can help me overcome such negative affective factors as anxiety, nervousness and shyness.	1	2	3	4	5

In the next stage of the study we would like to talk to individual students to learn more about their views on learner autonomy. Would you be interested in discussing this issue further with us?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Appendix F Interview Questions for ESL Instructors

1. Let's start by talking about what 'autonomy' means to you. How would you sum up your views on what learner autonomy is? How have you come to develop these ideas?
2. How and to what extent in your opinion does the promotion of language learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?
3. How desirable do you find the exercise of language learner autonomy in terms of decision making and learner abilities?
4. How feasible do you find the exercise of language learner autonomy in terms of decision making and learner abilities?
5. (How) do you try to help learners develop language learner autonomy? Do you use any specific strategies?
6. How are the roles of language teachers impacted by an autonomy-inspiring approach? What roles do/should teachers assume?
7. What are the key characteristics of an autonomous language learner?
8. In general, do you find the context driven towards promoting language learner autonomy? Why?
9. What are the main challenges that hinder the development learner autonomy?
10. What do you know about (European) Language Portfolio? Do you encourage learners to have a record of their language proficiency, progress and assessment?

Appendix G Interview Questions for TESL Trainers

1. Let's start by talking about what 'autonomy' means to you. How would you sum up your views on what learner autonomy is? How have you come to develop these ideas?
2. How and to what extent in your opinion does the promotion of language learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?
3. How desirable do you find the exercise of language learner autonomy in terms of decision making and learner abilities?
4. How feasible do you find the exercise of language learner autonomy in terms of decision making and learner abilities?
5. (How) do you try to encourage teachers to help learners develop language learner autonomy? Do you use any specific strategies?
6. How are the roles of language teachers impacted by an autonomy-inspiring approach? What roles do/should teachers assume?
7. What are the key characteristics of an autonomous language learner?
8. In general, do you find the context driven towards promoting language learner autonomy? Why?
9. What are the main challenges that hinder the development learner autonomy?
10. What do you know about (European) Language Portfolio? Do you instruct teachers to encourage their learners to develop their own language portfolio?

Appendix H Interview Questions for ESL Learners

Let's start by talking about your English class.

1- How much freedom do you feel you have to practice your own way of learning English? How much control does your teacher have on (a) what you learn, and (b) how you learn?

2- Does your English teacher encourage you to think about your learning, that is, how you learn?

3- Does he/she encourage you to plan your learning and set goals for your learning and choose the way you want to learn? Are you encouraged to make decisions about your learning?

4- Does your teacher encourage you to discuss your learning goals, strategies and problems in the classroom?

5- Does your teacher encourage you to write a learning diary/journal to write about your learning?

6- Do you know what a language portfolio is? Are you encouraged to have a record of your language proficiency, language learning experience, your goals, etc.?

7- How responsible do you think you are about your learning? How do you feel about it?

8- How do you feel about making decisions about your own learning?

9- Does your teacher teach you about different learning strategies or different ways that you can improve your language skills?

10- What do you know about self-access centers? What resources do you use for your learning besides your class material? Does your teacher encourage you to use other resources including online resources?

11- Are encouraged to form online/internet groups or join social media networks to discuss and share your

12- Do you know anything about self-assessment? How is evaluation done in your class?

13- Does your teacher do anything special to increase your motivation or make you more interested in your learning? Does he do anything to decrease your stress?

Appendix I Tables of Assumption

Appendix A: Subscales descriptive statistics (pilot data)

Table 1
Item Statistics (subscales)

Subscales		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Study guide 4	Communicate1	**4.03**	**1.159**	**30**
	ShrtPlns2	**3.73**	**.868**	**30**
	MdLngTmPlns3	**3.63**	**.765**	**30**
	StratCNSL4	**4.17**	**.950**	**30**
Classroom organizer 5	OrgGrps5	**4.53**	**.819**	**30**
	OrgPrs6	**4.23**	**.626**	**30**
	OrgDbt7	**3.70**	**1.022**	**30**
	AssgnPrsnts8	**4.37**	**.850**	**30**
	AssgnShPlys9	**3.37**	**1.299**	**30**
Resource facilitator 6	EncgPeerstd10	**3.83**	**.834**	**30**
	EncgOnlRscs11	**4.33**	**.802**	**30**
	EncgLisNws12	**3.57**	**1.073**	**30**
	EncgRdNps13	**3.27**	**.907**	**30**
	RcmndsRfBks14	**3.67**	**.959**	**30**
	RcmndsWbsts15	**3.93**	**.868**	**30**
Learning regulator 9	JnsActvts16	**3.77**	**1.073**	**30**
	OpnAccnts17	**3.73**	**1.015**	**30**
	EncgRflcts18	**4.37**	**.718**	**30**
	MntrsPrgrs19	**4.07**	**.740**	**30**
	EncgSlfAsms20	**4.03**	**.765**	**30**
	EncgPrAsms21	**3.80**	**.887**	**30**
	Motivates22	**3.87**	**.819**	**30**
	PraiseCnfdnc23	**4.03**	**.669**	**30**
	StrsAnxty24	**3.63**	**.928**	**30**

Table 2
Item Statistics (total scale)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Communicate1	**4.03**	**1.159**	**30**
ShrtPlns2	**3.73**	**.868**	**30**
MdLngTmPlns3	**3.63**	**.765**	**30**
StratCNSL4	**4.17**	**.950**	**30**
OrgGrps5	**4.53**	**.819**	**30**
OrgPrs6	**4.23**	**.626**	**30**
OrgDbt7	**3.70**	**1.022**	**30**

AssgnPrsnts8	**4.37**	**.850**	**30**
AssgnShPlys9	**3.37**	**1.299**	**30**
EncgPeerstd10	**3.83**	**.834**	**30**
EncgOnlRscs11	**4.33**	**.802**	**30**
EncgLisNws12	**3.57**	**1.073**	**30**
EncgRdNps13	**3.27**	**.907**	**30**
RcmndsRfBks14	**3.67**	**.959**	**30**
RcmndsWbsts15	**3.93**	**.868**	**30**
JnsActvts16	**3.77**	**1.073**	**30**
OpnAccnts17	**3.73**	**1.015**	**30**
EncgRflcts18	**4.37**	**.718**	**30**
MntrsPrgrs19	**4.07**	**.740**	**30**
EncgSlfAsms20	**4.03**	**.765**	**30**
EncgPrAsms21	**3.80**	**.887**	**30**
Motivates22	**3.87**	**.819**	**30**
PraiseCnfdnc23	**4.03**	**.669**	**30**
StrsAnxty24	**3.63**	**.928**	**30**

Table 3
Scale Statistics

Scale/subscales	Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
Study guide 4	**15.57**	**8.461**	**2.909**	**4**
Classroom organizer 5	**20.20**	**9.131**	**3.022**	**5**
Resource facilitator 6	**22.60**	**14.041**	**3.747**	**6**
Learning regulator 9	**35.30**	**24.148**	**4.914**	**9**
Total scale	**93.67**	**170.713**	**13.066**	**24**

Appendix B: Inter-item correlations descriptives (pilot data)

Table 1
Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Learning.Regulator	**35.3000**	**4.91409**	**30**
Resource.Facilitator	**22.6000**	**3.74718**	**30**
Classroom.Organizer	**20.2000**	**3.02176**	**30**
Study.Guide	**15.5667**	**2.90877**	**30**

Table 2
Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items

93.6667	**170.713**	**13.06570**	**4**

Appendix C: Subscales descriptives (main data)

Table 1
Item Statistics (subscales)

Subscales		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Study guide 4	Communicate1	**4.23**	**1.013**	**114**
	ShrtPlns2	**3.79**	**.877**	**114**
	MdLngTmPlns3	**3.65**	**.809**	**114**
	StratCNSL4	**4.26**	**.873**	**114**
Classroom organizer 5	OrgGrps5	**4.61**	**.723**	**114**
	OrgPrs6	**4.40**	**.700**	**114**
	OrgDbt7	**3.86**	**.911**	**114**
	AssgnPrsnts8	**4.30**	**.882**	**114**
	AssgnShPlys9	**3.02**	**1.269**	**114**
Resource facilitator 6	EncgPeerstd10	**3.88**	**.979**	**114**
	EncgOnlRscs11	**4.11**	**1.076**	**114**
	EncgLisNws12	**3.35**	**1.137**	**114**
	EncgRdNps13	**3.18**	**.943**	**114**
	RcmndsRfBks14	**3.53**	**1.083**	**114**
	RcmndsWbsts15	**3.96**	**.861**	**114**
Learning regulator 9	JnsActvts16	**3.75**	**.983**	**114**
	OpnAccnts17	**3.77**	**1.129**	**114**
	EncgRflcts18	**4.11**	**.916**	**114**
	MntrsPrgrs19	**3.98**	**.872**	**114**
	EncgSlfAsms20	**3.93**	**1.028**	**114**
	EncgPrAsms21	**3.86**	**1.003**	**114**
	Motivates22	**3.91**	**.908**	**114**
	PraiseCnfdnc23	**4.12**	**.754**	**114**
	StrsAnxty24	**3.93**	**.938**	**114**

Table 2
Item Statistics (total scale)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Communicate1	**4.23**	**1.013**	**114**
ShrtPlns2	**3.79**	**.877**	**114**
MdLngTmPlns3	**3.65**	**.809**	**114**
StratCNSL4	**4.26**	**.873**	**114**
OrgGrps5	**4.61**	**.723**	**114**
OrgPrs6	**4.40**	**.700**	**114**
OrgDbt7	**3.86**	**.911**	**114**
AssgnPrsnts8	**4.30**	**.882**	**114**

AssgnShPlys9	**3.02**	**1.269**	**114**
EncgPeerstd10	**3.88**	**.979**	**114**
EncgOnlRscs11	**4.11**	**1.076**	**114**
EncgLisNws12	**3.35**	**1.137**	**114**
EncgRdNps13	**3.18**	**.943**	**114**
RcmndsRfBks14	**3.53**	**1.083**	**114**
RcmndsWbsts15	**3.96**	**.861**	**114**
JnsActvts16	**3.75**	**.983**	**114**
OpnAccnts17	**3.77**	**1.129**	**114**
EncgRflcts18	**4.11**	**.916**	**114**
MntrsPrgrs19	**3.98**	**.872**	**114**
EncgSlfAsms20	**3.93**	**1.028**	**114**
EncgPrAsms21	**3.86**	**1.003**	**114**
Motivates22	**3.91**	**.908**	**114**
PraiseCnfdnc23	**4.12**	**.754**	**114**
StrsAnxty24	**3.93**	**.938**	**114**

Table 3
Scale Statistics

Scale/subscales	Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
Study guide 4	**15.93**	**7.181**	**2.680**	**4**
Classroom organizer 5	**20.19**	**6.458**	**2.541**	**5**
Resource facilitator 6	**22.00**	**20.389**	**4.515**	**6**
Learning regulator 9	**35.37**	**34.925**	**5.910**	**9**
Total scale	**93.49**	**171.049**	**13.079**	**24**

Appendix D: Inter-item correlations descriptives (main data)

Table 1
Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Learning.Regulator	**35.3684**	**5.90974**	**114**
Resource.Facilitator	**22.0000**	**4.51546**	**114**
Classroom.Organizer	**20.1930**	**2.54126**	**114**
Study.Guide	**15.9298**	**2.67972**	**114**

Table 2
Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
93.4912	**171.049**	**13.07855**	**4**

Appendix E: Response frequencies

Table 1
Communicate1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**4**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**
	Seldom	**4**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**7.0**
	Occasionally	**12**	**10.5**	**10.5**	**17.5**
	Often	**36**	**31.6**	**31.6**	**49.1**
	Always	**58**	**50.9**	**50.9**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 2
ShrtPlns2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**
	Seldom	**6**	**5.3**	**5.3**	**7.0**
	Occasionally	**28**	**24.6**	**24.6**	**31.6**
	Often	**56**	**49.1**	**49.1**	**80.7**
	Always	**22**	**19.3**	**19.3**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 3
MdLngTmPlns3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**
	Seldom	**4**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**5.3**
	Occasionally	**40**	**35.1**	**35.1**	**40.4**
	Often	**54**	**47.4**	**47.4**	**87.7**
	Always	**14**	**12.3**	**12.3**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 4
StratCNSL4

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**
	Seldom	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**3.5**
	Occasionally	**14**	**12.3**	**12.3**	**15.8**
	Often	**42**	**36.8**	**36.8**	**52.6**
	Always	**54**	**47.4**	**47.4**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 5
OrgGrps5

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**
	Occasionally	**4**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**5.3**
	Often	**28**	**24.6**	**24.6**	**29.8**
	Always	**80**	**70.2**	**70.2**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 6
OrgPrs6

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Seldom	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**
	Occasionally	**8**	**7.0**	**7.0**	**8.8**
	Often	**46**	**40.4**	**40.4**	**49.1**
	Always	**58**	**50.9**	**50.9**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 7
OrgDbt7

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**
	Seldom	**4**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**5.3**
	Occasionally	**32**	**28.1**	**28.1**	**33.3**
	Often	**46**	**40.4**	**40.4**	**73.7**
	Always	**30**	**26.3**	**26.3**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 8
AssgnPrsnts8

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**
	Seldom	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**3.5**
	Occasionally	**14**	**12.3**	**12.3**	**15.8**
	Often	**38**	**33.3**	**33.3**	**49.1**
	Always	**58**	**50.9**	**50.9**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 9
AssgnShPlys9

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**16**	**14.0**	**14.0**	**14.0**
	Seldom	**26**	**22.8**	**22.8**	**36.8**
	Occasionally	**28**	**24.6**	**24.6**	**61.4**
	Often	**28**	**24.6**	**24.6**	**86.0**
	Always	**16**	**14.0**	**14.0**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 10
EncgPeerstd10

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Seldom	**10**	**8.8**	**8.8**	**8.8**
	Occasionally	**32**	**28.1**	**28.1**	**36.8**
	Often	**34**	**29.8**	**29.8**	**66.7**
	Always	**38**	**33.3**	**33.3**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 11
EncgOnlRscs11

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**4**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**
	Seldom	**6**	**5.3**	**5.3**	**8.8**
	Occasionally	**18**	**15.8**	**15.8**	**24.6**
	Often	**32**	**28.1**	**28.1**	**52.6**
	Always	**54**	**47.4**	**47.4**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 12
EncgLisNws12

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**6**	**5.3**	**5.3**	**5.3**
	Seldom	**22**	**19.3**	**19.3**	**24.6**
	Occasionally	**32**	**28.1**	**28.1**	**52.6**
	Often	**34**	**29.8**	**29.8**	**82.5**
	Always	**20**	**17.5**	**17.5**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 13
EncgRdNps13

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**
	Seldom	**26**	**22.8**	**22.8**	**24.6**
	Occasionally	**46**	**40.4**	**40.4**	**64.9**
	Often	**30**	**26.3**	**26.3**	**91.2**
	Always	**10**	**8.8**	**8.8**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 14
RcmndsRfBks14

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**4**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**
	Seldom	**16**	**14.0**	**14.0**	**17.5**
	Occasionally	**34**	**29.8**	**29.8**	**47.4**
	Often	**36**	**31.6**	**31.6**	**78.9**
	Always	**24**	**21.1**	**21.1**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 15
RcmndsWbsts15

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Seldom	**6**	**5.3**	**5.3**	**5.3**
	Occasionally	**26**	**22.8**	**22.8**	**28.1**
	Often	**48**	**42.1**	**42.1**	**70.2**
	Always	**34**	**29.8**	**29.8**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 16
JnsActvts16

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**
	Seldom	**10**	**8.8**	**8.8**	**10.5**
	Occasionally	**30**	**26.3**	**26.3**	**36.8**
	Often	**44**	**38.6**	**38.6**	**75.4**
	Always	**28**	**24.6**	**24.6**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 17
OpnAccnts17

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**4**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**
	Seldom	**12**	**10.5**	**10.5**	**14.0**
	Occasionally	**28**	**24.6**	**24.6**	**38.6**
	Often	**32**	**28.1**	**28.1**	**66.7**
	Always	**38**	**33.3**	**33.3**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 18
EncgRflcts18

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Seldom	**8**	**7.0**	**7.0**	**7.0**
	Occasionally	**18**	**15.8**	**15.8**	**22.8**
	Often	**42**	**36.8**	**36.8**	**59.6**
	Always	**46**	**40.4**	**40.4**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 19
MntrsPrgrs19

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Seldom	**10**	**8.8**	**8.8**	**8.8**
	Occasionally	**14**	**12.3**	**12.3**	**21.1**
	Often	**58**	**50.9**	**50.9**	**71.9**
	Always	**32**	**28.1**	**28.1**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 20
EncgSlfAsms20

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**4**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**
	Seldom	**4**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**7.0**
	Occasionally	**28**	**24.6**	**24.6**	**31.6**
	Often	**38**	**33.3**	**33.3**	**64.9**
	Always	**40**	**35.1**	**35.1**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 21
EncgPrAsms21

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**4**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**
	Seldom	**6**	**5.3**	**5.3**	**8.8**
	Occasionally	**24**	**21.1**	**21.1**	**29.8**
	Often	**48**	**42.1**	**42.1**	**71.9**
	Always	**32**	**28.1**	**28.1**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 22
Motivates22

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**4**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.5**
	Seldom	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**5.3**
	Occasionally	**22**	**19.3**	**19.3**	**24.6**
	Often	**58**	**50.9**	**50.9**	**75.4**
	Always	**28**	**24.6**	**24.6**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 23
PraiseCnfdnc23

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Seldom	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**
	Occasionally	**20**	**17.5**	**17.5**	**19.3**
	Often	**54**	**47.4**	**47.4**	**66.7**
	Always	**38**	**33.3**	**33.3**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 24
StrsAnxty24

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	**2**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**
	Seldom	**6**	**5.3**	**5.3**	**7.0**
	Occasionally	**24**	**21.1**	**21.1**	**28.1**
	Often	**48**	**42.1**	**42.1**	**70.2**
	Always	**34**	**29.8**	**29.8**	**100.0**
	Total	**114**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Appendix J Ethical Approval

Western Research

Research Ethics

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board
NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Julie Byrd Clark
Department & Institution: Education\Western University

NMREB File Number: [redacted]
Study Title: Language Learner Autonomy in English as a Second/Foreign (ESL/EFL) Contexts.

NMREB Initial Approval Date: July 08, 2016
NMREB Expiry Date: July 08, 2017

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Recruitment Items	Language centre, Course coordinator, Version 2.	2016/06/14
Recruitment Items	Participants	2016/06/14
Western University Protocol	Received: June 15, 2016	
Letter of Information & Consent	Learners - Interview	2016/06/14
Letter of Information & Consent	Teacher trainers	2016/06/14
Letter of Information & Consent	Teachers	2016/06/14
Letter of Information & Consent	Learners Survey	2016/06/14
Letter of Information & Consent	Translated LOI Learners Survey (Received For Information)	2016/06/14
Letter of Information & Consent	Translated LOI (Learners Interview - Received For Information)	2016/06/14
Instruments	Interview for ESL/EFL Teacher Trainers - Received May 12, 2016	
Instruments	Interview for ESL/EFL Teachers - Received May 12, 2016	
Instruments	Interview for ESL/EFL learners - Received May 12, 2016	
Instruments	Survey for ESL/EFL learners - Received May 12, 2016	
Other	Certification of Translation (Received For Information)	2016/06/14

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number [redacted]

[redacted]

Ethics Officer: Erika Basile Nicole Kaniki Grace Kelly ✓ Katelyn Harris Vikki Tran Karen Gopaul

[redacted]

Curriculum Vitae

Alireza Mousavi Arfae

Education

- **Ph. D.** in *Second Language Education*; Western University, London ON, expected **11/2017**

o **Thesis:** Language Learner Autonomy in Ontario's ESL Context

- **Master of Arts (M.A.)** in *Teaching English as a Second Language*; Azad University, Central Tehran, Iran, **2012**

o **Thesis:** Comparative impact of developing critical thinking and language learner autonomy on EFL learners' speaking skill

- **Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)** in *English Language and Literature*; Azad University, Karaj, Iran, **2001**

Teaching Experience

More than 15 years of teaching experience to ESL learners from beginner to advanced levels at prestigious language schools since the year 2000.

ESL Instructor **05/2016 – 04/2017**

LINC Center, College Boreal

- Delivered English classes to ESL learners within a course devoted to the development of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, writing, and understanding of texts.
- Performed needs assessment with ESL learners.
- Tailored educational tasks and tests geared to learners' needs assessments.
- Provided learners with counseling on their weaknesses, strengths, and learning strategies.
- Coordinated teaching activities in accordance with course requirements.
- Prepared, planned and delivered multi-leveled English lessons, material, and teaching aids.
- Conducted progress assessments.
- Monitored and recorded student progress on a regular basis.
- Perform all required administrative duties: attendance, activity reports, etc.
- Attended team meetings when requested.

TESL Instructor **09/2013 - Current**

Western University, London ON (http://www.edu.uwo.ca)

- Prepared and delivered lectures to undergraduate and graduate TESOL students on TESL related issues within the courses of "Understanding Second Language Learning" and "Teaching the Four Skills".
- Instructed developing language learner autonomy in ELLs through workshops.
- Initiated, facilitated, and moderated classroom discussions.
- Evaluated and graded students' class work, assignments, and papers.

- Planned, evaluated, and revised curricula, course content, course materials, and methods of instruction.

English Instructor **09/2007 - 08/2012**

Safir Language Academy, Tehran, Iran (http://www.gosafir.com)

- Instructed general English courses including all four skills to adult ELLs.
- Instructed IELTS/TOEFL preparation courses.
- Observed and evaluated students' work to determine progress and make suggestions for improvement.
- Established clear objectives for all lessons, units, and projects and communicated those objectives to students.
- Prepared students for further education by encouraging them to explore learning opportunities and to persevere with challenging tasks.

English Instructor **09/2006 - 08/2012**

English Department, Mofid University, Tehran, Iran (http://www.mofidu.ac.ir)

- Instructed English for Academic Purposes courses aimed at helping adult ELLs develop academic reading, writing, grammar, listening, speaking, and vocabulary skills, and strategies necessary for success in college and university coursework.
- Instructed Business English course utilizing the latest materials including titles such as "Business English", "Business Vocabulary in Use" and "Commercial Correspondence" to prepare ELLs for the demands of the business world.
- Encouraged language learners to make use of online learning resources to develop language skills

English Instructor **09/2001 - 08/2012**

Allameh Ghotb Ravandi Institute of Foreign Languages, Tehran, Iran, (http://www.ghotbravandi.ac.ir)

- Instructed general English courses including all four skills to adult English Language Learners (ELLs).
- Prepared, administered, and graded tests and assignments to evaluate students' progress.
- Instructed English for Academic Purposes (EAP) including essay writing, and academic reading courses.
- Adapted teaching methods and instructional materials to meet students' varying needs and interests.
- Prepared materials and classrooms for class activities.

English Instructor **09/2003 - 08/2007**

Iran-Canada Language School, Tehran, Iran (http://irancanada-ac.com)

- Instructed English conversation courses to adult Ells.
- Augmented student learning through promoting learner autonomy.
- Evaluated and graded students' class work, assignments, and papers.
- Provided scaffolding to Ells to improve their language skills.

Academic Presentations

- Plenary speaker, TESL & ESL Instruction: Bringing Basics into the 21st Century; King's College, London ON, **2016**
- Round table presentation, ACLA/AAAL; Fairmont Royal York, Toronto ON, **2015**
- Round table presentation, Robert Macmillan Graduate Research in Education Symposium, Western University, London ON, **2015**

Certificates

- ESL Instructor: TESL Ontario Language Instructor Certificate of Accreditation **2016** (Membership #: T150116)
- TESL Trainer: TESL Ontario Certificate of Approval, Theory Instructor **2016** (Membership #: T150116)
- Advanced Teaching Program, Western University, **2016**
- Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) Bootcamp Course, **2016**

Honors and Activities

- Action research on the development of critical thinking and learner autonomy in ELLs
- Western University grant for doctoral research in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT)
- Certificate of distinction for "Teacher of the year" Ravandi Language Academy