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**Promoting EFL Learners' Autonomy in Online Learning
A Review of Four Articles**

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of Master in Didactics of Foreign Languages*

Submitted by:

Zineb Betrouni
Asma Demmou

Supervised by:

Meriem Kater

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Board of Examiners

Chair: Dr. Mohammed Akhrib, University of Algiers 2

Examiner: Prof. Faiza Bensemmane, University of Algiers 2

Supervisor: Ms. Meriem Kater, University of Algiers 2

Declaration

We, Betrouni Zineb and Demmou Asma declare hereby that the work provided in this thesis is the result of our investigation. We declare that all the information that is not original to this work is cited in the bibliography section, and all the data that are original in this work have not been submitted elsewhere for any degree or qualification.

Date: 20/06/ 2022

Signed:

Dedication

*To my beloved parents, whose affection,
love, encouragement and prayers
make me able to get such success and
honor and face the eventualities of life
with zeal and fear of god.*

To my sweet brothers,

To my grandparents,

To my lovely best friend Asma

To all my family,

*Along with all hard working and respected
teachers.*

This humble work is a sign of my love to you!

Zineb BETROUNI

*To my dearest parents, who have always been a
source of inspiration, encouragement and stamina to
undertake my higher education.*

*To my adored sister Amina for she has been a
second mother to me,*

To my siblings and sister in law,

,To my hero nephew Ghaith and lovely niece Arwa

*To my precious best friends Zineb, Houda and
Dhikra,*

*To my dear teachers who have always been there for
me,*

*To every gentle soul who has morally supported me,
I dedicate this work.*

Asma DEMMOU

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Abstract

The vast emergence of technology around the world resulted in the use of modern approaches to facilitate learning. The current study attempts to compare and contrast four articles that dealt with promoting learner autonomy in online learning, as well as to shed light on the importance of this educational sub-skill. The participants of the articles are EFL learners with different geographical contexts. The methodologies that were used are qualitative, quantitative and case study methods. The findings showed that online learning promotes learners' autonomy when methods and techniques such as scaffolding are used properly. However, some studies revealed misuse of online instruments and lack of teachers scaffolding, the low psychological flexibility of learners and absence of their awareness. Based on these results, the four articles were compared and contrasted in terms of their major findings. Toward the end of the dissertation, useful data was provided about the subject matter in order to understand the effects of enhancing learners and reasons that may cause failure of achieving this objective. This may help language teachers take appropriate measures for helping the students foster their autonomy, and to find appropriate methods that may be implemented in the near future.

Keywords: learner autonomy, EFL classes, online learning, innovative teaching, technology

List of Acronyms

AFLL: Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning

ALAS: Autonomous Learning Activity Scale

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESPR: Evaluation-Sheet for Perception of the Roles

ICT: Information and Communication Technologies

LA: Learner Autonomy

LAQ: Learner Autonomy Questionnaire

OLRs: Online learning resources

SPOT: Sistem Pembelajaran Online Terpadu

Spot UPI: Sistem Pembelajaran Online Terpadu Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

TBA: Technology Based Approach

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General Introduction

The development of technology in the 21st century led to an alteration from traditional to more modern approaches of teaching and learning English. Technology and internet access resulted in the consideration of online education which sheds light on autonomous learning. Thus, fostering learners' autonomy through the use of online learning and certain techniques is essential for the future of language learners.

The field of language learning witnessed a paradigm shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred instruction and learning. Ying (2002) mentioned in his research that “infusing technology in the classroom may significantly contribute to the growth in learners’ motivation, autonomy and thinking skills” (p. 35). This paradigmatic transition entailed utilising more virtual and smart oriented classrooms through online learning; which results in attempts to promote learner's autonomy. This is applied in the field of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) which requires autonomous learning. In this same respect, Holec (1981) states that “Autonomous learners assume responsibility for determining the purpose, content, rhythm, and method of their learning, monitoring its progress, and evaluating its outcomes” (p. 3). Besides, the involvement of efforts and initiatives on the part of learners and awareness during this process is as important as the inclusion of autonomy in education.

The rise of technology and the demands of the 21st century learners have changed the classical ways of both teaching and learning and led to e-learning. Thus, the concept of learners autonomy came into sight as it is a dominant aspect for the success of online education. English as a foreign language learners have lived with those recent changes and that has influenced their perspectives and attitudes towards learning English. EFL learners have been trying to cope with the new circumstances of studying. Some learners managed to study on their own, whilst others struggled and were always attached to the classical educational systems. It appeared that these learners held unpleasant prior experiences or no experiences at all and this can be really challenging and frustrating. Therefore, the present dissertation examines the effect of online learning in promoting EFL learners’ autonomy

This topic is worth investigating since it tackles the recent modern methods of teaching and learning used in most universities and draws attention to the relevance of autonomy as a central pillar in the educational field. This investigation elucidates the importance of using certain techniques by the instructors to raise awareness of their learners' to be more autonomous and self-directed. Additionally, it compares and contrasts how students of different geographical, pedagogical and personal backgrounds display distinct attitudes and outcomes in online learning.

This secondary research tries to investigate the correlation between online learning and learners autonomy in EFL classrooms. It explains how most today's learners struggle to cope with the new technologies and why they are entailed to be autonomous and open to novel alternatives to traditional learning. This purpose determines the factors that may affect the success of autonomy's inclusion in online learning and unfolds the roles of both teachers and learners during the process of meeting their educational objectives. Therefore, the selected articles of this dissertation aim to compare and contrast the findings and identify the usefulness of autonomy in online learning.

The present work consists of a general introduction, two parts, and a general conclusion. First, the general introduction contains the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose, and the structure of the dissertation. The first part of the research deals with the theoretical background which focuses mainly on autonomy and online learning in language education, teachers and students' roles in online learning, factors that affect promoting autonomy in online learning and theories of promoting it online and sources associated with teaching and learning English as a foreign language, according to different researchers' studies. The second part represents the empirical studies, and a systematic foundation to critically assess and analyse the four selected articles in terms of research problems and questions, research design, in addition to research results and findings.

Part One

Theoretical Background

Introduction

The present dissertation is concerned with promoting autonomy in online learning. Many EFL learners may struggle to study online which might highly affect their performance and success. For this reason, some researchers tackled the notion of autonomy in online learning and tried to find out the techniques and tools used to not only promote autonomy but also to find out the reasons behind the difficulties shown by learners to become autonomous. The current part presents a general insight on autonomy in online learning and how it can affect learners' performance and self-regulation. It is divided into four sections. The first section provides some definitions and explanations about autonomy in foreign language learning. The second section is devoted to the definition of online learning and the roles of teachers and learners. As for the third section, it deals with autonomy in online learning along with factors affecting it. Finally, the fourth part provides some approaches and theories to teaching and suggestions of methods that can be implemented to promote autonomy in online learning.

1. Learner Autonomy in foreign language learning

Learner autonomy is a necessary skill for the learning process.

1.1. Definition of Learner Autonomy

The Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project led to the publication of Holec's (1981) seminal report and the first appearance of the term "Learner Autonomy". It is a notion that was first coined by Henry Holec. The etymology of the concept derives from the Greek *autonomia* which means "independence," living by one's own laws." *Autos* "refers to 'self' whereas *nomos* signifies "law" (Online Etymology Dictionary). Holec defines autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (p. 3). Additionally, Little (1991) elucidates autonomy essentially as a "capacity-for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (p.4). Although there is no consensus on the concept of autonomy in language learning and that many definitions have been given to

autonomy depending on the writer's perspectives and the context, most of them agreed on the fact that autonomy refers to students' independent learning.

1.2. Importance of Learner Autonomy in EFL Classes

Barrantes and Olivares (2008) suggest that long-term linguistic goals are achieved when students participate actively and the process of internalising the language becomes more meaningful. Consequently, learners autonomy is essential in the EFL classroom as it entails students being conscious and making thoughtful decisions. Autonomy aims at strengthening learners' responsibility for their learning, promoting their independence and helping them attain their goals to be successful (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p.131). Therefore, one can conclude the following points:

- A. -Autonomy sharpens learners' consciousness to be active learners.
- B. -It reduces anxiety and boosts learners' enthusiasm to participate in the learning process.
- C. . - It helps learners achieve self-regulation and discipline.

Fostering autonomy in EFL classes empowers learners' skills and lifelong learning. It provides them with a set of opportunities which aids in the resolution of learning challenges. Learner autonomy is the necessary independence needed for their success.

2. Online Learning

One of the new approaches to teaching is online learning.

2.1. Definition of Online Learning

Dhull and Sakshi (2019) define online learning as a convenient method for learners to retain information at ease. It can be done through the use of technologies such as webs, email, group chats and texts, audio and video conferencing. Online learning is an innovative mode of study that facilitates learning. Online education necessitates a significant investment of time and money. Through its innovative and

dynamic content delivery, e-learning has reintroduced the joy of learning and has shown to be more appealing to students.

1.2.2. Teachers and Learners roles in Online Learning

Both teachers and learners play a significant role in online learning.

2.2.1 Teachers' role in Online Learning

Online learning needs teachers' support and supervision to form independent individuals. Little (1995) believes that “teacher autonomy to be prerequisite to learner autonomy” (p.78). Consequently, online learning is based on autonomy. In this respect, Harmer (2007) believes that the teacher can perform various roles apart from facilitator (p. 34–36). These roles are: a guide, facilitator, and an evaluator.

2.2.1.1. Teacher as guide

In online education, teachers need to guide learners during the whole learning process. This occurs by showing learners the way to access webs, how to submit an assignment online, using different tools and giving them pieces of advice to master time management to be fully organised.

2.2.1.2. Teacher as facilitator

As online learning provides opportunities to have access to different resources; teachers should take advantage of this to have original approaches to teaching. In order to keep the learning process dynamic, teachers should advocate the use of online tools such as: audiovisuals, guided discussions, online quizzes, collaborative writing. Engaging in activities will stimulate learners' interest.

2.2.1.3 Teacher as evaluator

E-learning requires learners to be involved in different activities. Teachers need to constantly assess their learners' progress and take into account their affective filter. Providing feedback and correcting learners' work is crucial for learners to sustain

motivation. The latter is the fuel to commitments and success of learning. Having an account on students' profile will confirm if knowledge has been transmitted and retained correctly. Therefore, both teachers and learners will be informed about strengths and weaknesses of the subject matter.

2.2.2. Students' roles in Online Learning

Benn (1976) describes an autonomous learner as the one "whose life has a consistency that derives from a coherent set of beliefs, values and principles and who engages in a still-continuing process of criticism and re-evaluation" (cited in Candy, 1991, p.102). This duplicates researchers' attempt to understand language learners' roles in online learning.

2.2.2.1. Self-regulation

It is regarded as a dynamic concept to capture language learners' strategic efforts. Self-regulation strategies are those that allow students to monitor their own learning. The learner will make use of his ability to self-direct his learning only if he so wishes (Holec, 1988, p.08). Successful students learn how to self-regulate their learning early on; they decide how, when, and why to use a given strategy.

2.2.2.2. Self-monitoring

It is considered as keeping track of one's progress and recording the results through a) self-monitoring sheets, b) self or peer evaluation and c) the use of checklists to better organise their assignments and easily verify the deadlines.

2.2.2.3. Goal-setting

Setting goals helps students understand what they are striving for and commit to their plans. It is performed through setting achievable objectives for learning, reviewing them when needed and monitoring one's own progress. This will boost student's engagement, motivation, and effort.

The success of online learning is the contribution of not only the teachers who promote learners autonomy, but also the involvement of the students in the learning process.

3. Autonomy and Online Learning in Language Education

Language learning is not restricted to formal settings only. It extends beyond the classroom and it has never been isolated from online learning. This form of learning can be done through the use of applications, online courses, available worksheets, websites and online exams. Therefore, there is a complementary relation between learners autonomy and technology, given that the latter is a key factor to learners' success. ‘‘The integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) in course offerings in institutions of higher learning (IHLs) is the catalyst towards empowering learners to become autonomous lifelong learners’’ (Kaur & Sidhur, 2010, p.88). Moreover, ‘‘the rapid development of technology highlighted the need for continuous training and honing of new skills’’ (Añonuevo, 2002, p.xv). Accordingly, the thrive to succeed entails the integration of autonomy to handle overwhelming amounts of information that online learning offers.

3.2. Factors that affect promoting autonomy in online learning

Psychology has demonstrated its efficient effects on the learning process. Based on this foundation, there are three primary psychological factors that significantly impact how learners respond to learning situations. These elements are: motivation, anxiety and attitudes.

3.2.1. Motivation

Motivation is an important factor in education to achieve one's goal. According to Gardner (1985), motivation stands for ‘‘the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language’’ (p. 10).Learner's motivation has been considered as an active factor in the process of self-directed learning; indeed, "motivation is a necessary condition for

autonomy" (Murray et al. 2001, p.63). Learners skip online courses or do not participate at all, when they experience lower levels of motivation. Therefore, teachers are responsible to boost learners' online motivation through designing suitable courses and scaffolding their learners. Ushioda (1996) points out that "autonomous language learners are by definition motivated learners" (p. 2). Therefore, an online learning environment should cater for motivation and participation and sustain its levels in ways that are shaped by the individual's specific needs and wants.

3.2.2. Anxiety

Another psychological factor which can affect autonomous learning is anxiety. It is considered as a barrier to language learning. Online learning can cause frustration and anxiety when learners procrastinate and fail to understand their lessons. Krashen's (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis states that when anxiety is high, it will cause a mental block. It is considered as a barrier that hinders the input from reaching the language acquisition device. The presence of tension and worry in FLL will inhibit the practices of Learner's autonomy which does not align with the requirements of a good independent EFL learner.. Oxford (1990) states "good language learners are often those who know how to control their emotions and attitudes about learning by using effective strategies such as lowering anxiety, encouraging themselves, and taking their emotional temperatures". (p. 140)

3.2.3. Attitudes

Positive attitudes are tools that foster enthusiasm, and create an atmosphere conducive to learning. Wenden (1998, p. 52) (as cited in Thanasoulas, 2000, p. 7) defined attitudes as "learned motivations, valued beliefs, evaluations, what one believes is acceptable, or responses oriented towards approaching or avoiding". One of the goals of online learning is to prioritize students' needs by taking a student-centered approach as a medium of instruction. This will shed light on learners' attitudes since it requires learners to be more independent; being open to new experiences and change will stimulate learners to engage in online learning. White

(2008, p.4) states that experiences encourage self-reliance and promote the development of learning strategies. Consequently, the availability of technological resources and experiences, individualized courses, study habits, objectives, reasons, and personal attributes all have an impact on students' attitudes in e-learning.

Online learning relies heavily on the notion of autonomy. However, it is a shared responsibility from both teachers and learners in order to achieve the desirable outcomes. Nevertheless, both of them need to consider the factors that affect LA for a better learning experience.

4. Theories of promoting Learners' Autonomy in Online Learning

There are several theories that teachers can opt for to promote learners autonomy when using online learning.

4.1 Scaffolding Theory

The advance of ICTs has shifted EFL instruction from the traditional face-to-face mode into online learning. It resulted in new demands for competent and digital literate online instructors and high-quality online courses. According to Hill and Hannafin (1997) without scaffolding, learners demonstrate poor ability to regulate their learning, and failure to gain a conceptual understanding of complex topics with computer-based learning. This learning mode requires teachers to 1) guide the students to acquire new knowledge and skills, 2) to present a variety of instructional support 3) to create opportunities for collaborative work through peer-to-peer learning and 4) provide their learners with consistent feedback online. E-feedback is done through the use of ICT tools to supply the learners with information about their learning. The constant provision of feedback upgrades the instructor-learner communication or conversation (Denton, Madden, Roberts, & Rowe, 2008). Therefore, It is worth mentioning that the role of the teachers extends beyond transmitting knowledge only, but they have to monitor it consistently. Jumaat and Tasir (2015) identify four types of scaffolding in their review of literature that can be present in online courses.

Procedural scaffolding: It helps students to use the tools available to them.

Conceptual scaffolding: this helps students determine what to consider in learning and it guides them to prioritize fundamental concepts.

Strategic scaffolding: this suggests alternatives for students to tackle the learning problems they may face.

Metacognitive scaffolding: this guides students in the thinking process and helps them self-assess during learning

Hence, online learning requires the use of a set of scaffolding types and strategies that contribute to the attainment of the lesson objectives.

4.1.1 The Opposing Perspectives of scaffolding

It is noteworthy that some opposing perspectives were directed to the theory of Scaffolding and student learning results. According to Dickinson (1987) “complete responsibility for one's learning, carried out without the involvement of a teacher or pedagogic materials” (p. 11). As a result, he considers autonomy crucial in L2 learning and no assistance or scaffolding from the teacher or curriculum are required. In this same respect, Gegeo and Nielsen (2003) see that there are certain individual and formative contextual factors that may influence or determine the process of L2 learning such as: participation, roles and the complexity of the productive skills. Scaffolding requires instructors to increase student's confidence in understanding the content and goals of the course by creating an atmosphere for online interaction.

4.2 Connectivism

According to Siemens, “Connectivism is a learning theory for the Digital Age” (Siemens, 2005). The study of connectivism resulted in the development of the first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) named Connectivism and Connectivist Knowledge. It was created in 2008 by George Siemens and Stephen Downes. This theory puts the learners at the center of the learning process. It advocates that they are able to manage it by using technological sources to meet their learning objectives.

Siemens opposed the traditional theories which suggested that learning happens inside the head of the individual. He believed that learning is a complex process by which learners need to rely on technology to store and receive knowledge. On this account, learning occurs when a learner connects to a diversified learning community and shares information into it. It will promote critical thinking, decision-making and problem solving as Siemens (2005) states “learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources” (p. 5). In an educational setting, this connection will facilitate and enrich learners’ knowledge.

4.2.1. The Opposing Perspectives of Connectivism

One of the main opposing views towards connectivism is the fact that it is a pedagogical view and not a learning theory. According to Kerr’s perception, connectivism fails to qualify as a theory as it declares the network itself to be the source of knowledge and everything connected to it is a knowledge maker. He argues that:

Connectivism does not contribute to a theory or learning reform, due to its use of "language and slogans that are sometimes ‘correct’ but are too generalized to guide new practice at the level of how learning actually happens, and connectivism "misrepresents the current state of established alternative learning theories such as constructivism, behaviourism and cognitivism, so this basis for a new theory is also dubious" (Kerr, 2006, p.p. 5-7).

Besides, Verhagen (2006) opposed the view of connectivism as a new theory. He disagrees with Siemens' view that learning can reside in non-human appliances. “Siemens defines learning as “actionable knowledge” that can reside outside of ourselves (within an organization or a database). This is a remarkable definition because learning is not defined as a process but as a result. If we adopt this definition of learning, then the observation that this knowledge can reside in a database or organisation is trivial” (p.3). Hence, connectivism serves as a pedagogy because it does not take into account concepts that define learning.

4.3 Technology Based Approaches

Benson (2011) identifies six major approaches to developing autonomy. Among these, he suggested Technology Based Approach. Koller et al. (2008) define TBA as:

The learning of content via all electronic technology, including the Internet, intranets, satellite broadcasts, audio and video tape, video and audio conferencing, Internet conferencing, chat rooms, e-bulletin boards, webcasts, computer-based instruction, and CD-ROM. TBA also encompasses related terms, such as online learning and web-based learning that only include learning that occurs via the Internet, and computer-based learning that is restricted to learning using computers. (p. 4)

Autonomy is fostered in TBA. This method emphasizes the necessity of an independent autonomous interaction with technological devices (Smith, 2015, p. 85). This entails learners to be autonomous by selecting what is relevant to meet their needs and objectives since technology offers a great deal of sources. TBA enables learners to overcome the boundaries of different geographical areas. It provides opportunities for them to engage with academic institutions and significant others.

4.3.1. The Opposing Perspectives of TBA

Researchers agree that integrating ICT into teaching and learning is a complex process with all technology applications. Jones (2001) assumes that the use of technology in itself poses some challenges. He proposes four constraints which can inhibit enhancing learner autonomy in online learning. These are the lack of technical support and learners' ICT skills, and the lack of learners' enthusiasm decreases their engagement in learning and accomplishing tasks. Additionally, poor interaction among learners can also lead to the flopping of group projects which are highly favoured in online learning. These approaches need to be properly used by teachers and learners: By a) designing suitable activities which meet learners' needs and styles and b) encouraging their contribution and decision making about their learning objectives as Benson (2001) says "a great deal depends on the ways in which technologies are made available to the learners and the kinds of interaction that take place around them" (p.140). As long as TBA runs the risk of isolating learners as they proceed through their learning exercises, learners must be provided with feedback and support. Thus, interpersonal interaction is critical to overcome this obstacle as social

constructivism suggests that successful teaching and learning is heavily dependent on interpersonal interaction and discussion, with the primary focus on the students' understanding of the discussion (Prawat, 1992).

Many theories emerged to support the use of online learning in enhancing learners autonomy. Most of them agree on the fact that online learning facilitates the learning process and helps learners to take responsibility for their own learning. However, some opposing views happen to disagree, claiming that the use of technology can have many constraints and deviate from the real meaning of learning.

Autonomy in foreign language learning is a prerequisite skill for learners' success. The theoretical background examined the connection between autonomy and online learning in EFL classes. It aimed at revealing factors that promote autonomy. This part attempted to concentrate on approaches that may be implemented to promote EFL learners' autonomy in online learning. The second part is dedicated to the empirical studies where the four selected articles will be compared and contrasted, mainly their findings.

Online learning requires learners to be fully independent in managing their studies. The need for autonomy is undeniable under the use of this approach of learning. The success of learners relies heavily on how determined they are to take accountability of their learning. Consequently, online learning, which is a form of distance learning, encourages learners to work on their own. In this respect, Murphy (2007) advocates that "Distance learners are often assumed to be learning autonomously because they control a number of aspects of their learning, such as the time, the pace, what to study and when to study" (74).

Part Two

Review of Empirical Studies

Introduction

The current part intends to compare and critically discuss four educational articles from different contexts about autonomy and online learning. The articles were selected because they had pre-existing pieces of information about the connection of autonomy and online learning in different contexts, which may help students explore the educational implications of using technology to enhance their autonomy in EFL classes. The present part is divided into three main sections. The first section is about an overview of the selected articles in terms of their context of the study, participants, research instruments, and data analysis procedure. The second one is for the comparison of the major findings of each study. The third section is about the discussions of the findings and their connection to the different mentioned theories related to autonomy. It entails an answer to the research problem alongside a general conclusion.

2.1. Overview of the Articles:

The following sections provide an overview of the articles that have been investigated.

2.1.1. MısıR et.al (2018)

This study was conducted in 2018. It covered the examination of learners' autonomy in massive online learning courses in Ufuk University of Turkey. It attempted to investigate learners' perception of their autonomy, roles and whether the use of these online language courses would enhance the learners autonomy.

The researchers adopted a mixed method design to collect data from a learner autonomy questionnaire by Joshi (2011) conducted with 57 participants from three English MOOLCs and interaction data collected via tracking the participants' Future Learn Profiles comments. The questionnaire consists of two sections (Autonomous Learning Activity Scale (ALAS) and Evaluation-Sheet for Perception of the Roles). The majority of the participants were from different backgrounds including Asians, Europeans, South Americans, Africans, North Americans and Australians. As for the

interaction data, that is, the participants' posts in the open discussion forums were collected via tracking the participants' FutureLearn Profiles to triangulate the quantitative data while answering comments in the discussion forum of the three MOOLCs were analyzed via a macro coding system. Fifty-seven participants were randomly chosen from the learners registered in the three courses of September and October 2016 session of Exploring English.

The results of the questionnaire and the comments have revealed that learners show positive attitudes towards the use of MOOLCs. Therefore, the researchers suggested that enhanced learner autonomy in MOOLCs can result in motivating and reflective language learning.

2.1.2 Meri-Yılan (2019)

The second study, which was published by Meri-Yılan in 2019, shed light on learner autonomy and scaffolding in e-learning environments. This study sets the grounds for learners to use scaffolding, teachers to implement scaffolding, institutions to provide a scaffolded autonomous e-learning and designers to set up an environment that enables educational equality and opportunity for all learners.

The participants of this study were 35 international EFL students aged between 20-45 years and who came from Middle Eastern (i.e. Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen and Libya) and Central Asian countries (i.e. China and Thailand). This study used a mixed methods approach to collect and analyse data. As a quantitative research instrument, a questionnaire consisting of four sections (i.e. Background Information, Rating the EAP Toolkit and Online Language Learning Resources, Attribution Item). As for qualitative research instruments, direct observation with the think-aloud protocol method and the digital screen capturing with video, and follow-up interviews, Self-efficacy Items and Learner Autonomy and Support Scale Items) were implemented.

Data from qualitative and quantitative research instruments revealed that participants had both positive and negative beliefs. The findings from the four instruments indicated subjects' internal attributions towards their success and failure and highlighted the effect of scaffolding on learner autonomy.

2.1.3 Suryatiningsih (2018)

The third study was conducted by Sri Suryatiningsih (2018) in Indonesia. Its main aim was to investigate the learner's perception of improving learner autonomy using web-based learning.

This research relied on purposive sampling as the participants from particular subgroups share an important experience relevant to the research and the researchers chose the students who participate in the forum discussion in Sistem Pembelajaran Online Terpadu (SPOT). Participants of this study are postgraduate students of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. The researchers adopted the case study as a method of collecting data. It was conducted from March till the end of the semester in May 2018. The instruments used were questionnaires followed by interviews to have a deeper understanding of data. The data from the questionnaire was described using descriptive statistics by means and percentage (Verschuren, 2003). The data analysis was done through coding, inputting, screening and cleaning the data, and data manipulation. As for the qualitative content analysis, it was divided into five phases; these were transcribing, pre-coding and coding, growing ideas using data display, interpreting the data and drawing conclusions (Dornyei, 2011).

Findings of the study revealed that Sistem Pembelajaran Online Terpadu (SPOT UPI) is unable to support web-based learning and learners are not satisfied with the current system and the online discussion. Therefore, researchers recommended that the system needs to be improved in order to help learners achieve autonomy in virtual learning.

2.1.4 Baraka (2021)

The fourth study was conducted by Baraka in 2021 in Algeria. It attempted to examine the extent to which the Internet may have impacts on boosting the EFL learners' autonomous skills at the Faculty of Letters and Languages at the University of Mustapha Stambouli at Mascara. The study contained three research questions that are related to the readiness of EFL learners to be autonomous, the digital literacy of EFL learners and its efficacy on autonomous learning skills as well as the role of EFL teachers to make their learners more autonomous. To set up the study, 40 EFL Master Didactics students were questioned, and four EFL teachers at the same university were interviewed. It involves the collection and the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study. Accordingly, the study is quantitative through the use of a 'questionnaire' for EFL learners and it is qualitative through the use of a semi-structured interview with EFL teachers.

The mixed methods approach was adopted to first identify EFL learners' attitudes and awareness towards the effectiveness of learner autonomy through the use of the Internet, and second to discover the teachers' role in promoting the learners' autonomy autonomous learning The findings give good credits to the implementation of ICT and Internet in education in general and in universities in particular. The results revealed that EFL instructors hold a positive approach towards the Internet. Most of the respondents agree on the fact that the Internet is a useful means, and it is an added value to the teaching-learning process as it plays a significant role in improving the quality of education.

2.2- Comparison and contrast of major findings of the four studies

The function of the findings section is to objectively report key findings, without interpretation. This portion of the work is dedicated to compare and contrast the major findings of the four articles and present what data was accumulated.

The four articles resulted from the same motive which is to discover the effect of online learning on learners autonomy. They all used similar qualitative and

quantitative instruments such as interviews, questionnaires and observations. The studies were conducted with a small population study sample to maximize the learning experience, yet data analysis and collection differ.

Most students showed readiness to be autonomous. The findings revealed that the participants in MısıR et.al's (2018) study are highly responsible for their own learning through the use of Massive Online Courses. Whilst, in Meri-Yılan (2019)'s study the participants had different learning actions in a scaffolded e-learning environment. Through scaffolding, learners managed their learning by themselves. Similarly, the students' answers to the questionnaire of Baraka's (2021) study confirm learners' readiness to be autonomous. They also found out that the Internet is very effective in their learning since it has many advantages. However, the findings of Suryatiningsih (2018) indicated that the system (SPOT UPI) had some drawbacks namely technical issues which hindered learners' autonomy due to being anxious when struggling with the use of the system.

The four articles reported different attitudes to learning online and independently. Students of Meri-Yılan's show inflexible attendance of online courses. The students claim that the source of such behaviors is due to anxiety and frustration, the results confirmed that learners exhibit positive attitudes towards the use of technology in enhancing their autonomy. The three tables in the findings section in MısıR et.al (2018)'s study have been interpreted accordingly in a form of different paragraphs that explained the statistical results as well. Similarly, the Algerian informants' attitudes towards the Internet in Baraka (2021)'s study reveal that the majority had positive attitudes towards the use of the internet. Most of the respondents agree on the fact that the internet is a useful tool and it is an added value to the teaching-learning process. Nevertheless, web based learners of Suryatiningsih's (2018) study were overwhelmed by the huge amount of information. They were not able to manage the sources and the materials presented were too difficult as students showed lack of enthusiasm.

Generally speaking, the studies' results also revealed that: 1) teacher scaffolding was not promoted in web based learning. Although learners received instant feedback, the absence of its clarification and delicate monitoring resulted in their dissatisfaction, and 2) the interviewed teachers agreed that the Internet can have many advantages in the Algerian context. However, they believed that their students are not autonomous learners. They admitted that their learners have never been tutored on how to be autonomous. In this same respect, Meri-Yilan (2019)'s study showed the teachers' great amount of assistance through both the use of certain strategies and scaffolding techniques which helped in the design, presentation as well as the evaluation of learners online. Mısır et.al (2018)'s study showed that more than 95% of the learners use the Internet and computers to improve their English which results in motivating a high level of learner autonomy among the MOOLC participants. The majority of students agree on the need of developing their own learning techniques based on their own learning styles, abilities, interests, motivation, affordances, and constraints. They also believe that goal-oriented learning, time management, self-evaluation, and social networking involvement are all their own duties. Nevertheless, learners still appreciate the teachers' feedback and seek their guidance.

The four studies have concluded that online learning requires learners to be autonomous. Besides, there are certain factors that can affect them such as motivation, anxiety and attitudes. The level of motivation needs to be high in order to maintain a positive attitude towards online learning. As for anxiety, it serves as a mental block for learners when it is high. Therefore, they need to master self-discipline to control their emotions. The diversity of technological tools that eases the learning process encourages learners to learn beyond the classroom. They have access to unlimited sources and various videos that include explanations of lessons. This will be the fuel to their autonomy as learning is no longer that hard and it is still possible even without the presence of their teachers. There is an interrelated relation between online learning and learner autonomy. The former is one way to develop learner autonomy and the latter is a fundamental skill in the success of online learning. It helps in shaping life-long learners and enhances the quality of learning to have less

spoon-feeding methods. However, teachers remain invaluable pillars in the academic development of learners.

2.3 Discussion of the findings:

The four articles tackle the topic of fostering learners' autonomy in online learning. The findings of the articles report how the combination of online courses, ICT tools presence and both scaffolding techniques and types can affect learners' autonomy in online learning. The following paragraphs are to treat the findings according to the principles of the aforementioned theories selected in the literature review.

Firstly, all the participants of the studies had different perspectives towards the use of ICT tools and scaffolding techniques in online courses. In Meri-Yilan's (2019) article, the results of the study show that through scaffolding, learners don't need the assistance of teachers or peers, but they managed their learning by themselves (Hannafin et al., 1999; Luckin, 2001; Wood & Wood, 1996) through the use of other learning resources apart from the EAP toolkit suggested and scaffolded by their teachers.

Participants had both positive and negative beliefs about learning in scaffolded e-learning environments and assumed that their success or failure is dependent upon their internal attributions. Thanks to scaffolding, the participants used conceptual and metacognitive scaffolding to find further activities and expand their understanding. For instance, they expressed their understanding of learning objects and corrected their mistakes. Teachers' guidance and the variety of instructional support created opportunities for online collaborative work through peer-to-peer learning. This helped the students to acquire new knowledge and skills. Therefore, it can be confirmed that scaffolding types go hand in hand with learning and that students self-regulate their learning online. It is said that psychological factors may affect the success of online courses and hence, lead to the failure of the concept of autonomy. Although the Toolkit does not provide motivational scaffolding, the study argues that self-scaffolding can lead to motivational scaffolding. For example, they independently used utterances such as 'Good! I did very well.' or 'Congratulations

for myself!'. Additionally, they also highlighted the importance of feedback as the most relevant scaffolder (Pea, 2004; Quintana, et.al 2004) in the interview sessions.

Similarly, in Mısır et.al's (2018) article, the attitudes shown by learners are also positive. They were motivated to use technological resources to study, improve their English and promote their autonomy. The ease of using massive online courses helped in achieving higher motivation in their learning; which is one of the psychological factors that has to be high so it does not hinder learning English or any other second language. Learners used strategies that are aligned with their learning styles, abilities and interests. They used summarising and reviewing to assess the course materials. This is a sign that learners are responsible for their learning. This proves that learners' autonomy is boosted in an online environment that allows learners to be independent. Findings also revealed that the massive learning courses are built around the theory of connectivism. Learners managed to connect with each other which enables them to study collaboratively. As one of the participants stated:” I think this course has been very interesting in every aspect, but the best of all is definitely the commentary feed, where you get to know the other learners and spread your own English skills as well.” Another learner stated that "It is free, open source, anytime and anywhere, and unites the global sharing and new learning." “It gives me an idea of how other people from around the world think and learn. This indicates that the social principle of connectivism is achieved.

Besides, learners showed a positive reaction towards using the technological tools. They managed to use it effectively to enhance their autonomy. They also used self-evaluation, time management and goal setting and achieving to exercise their independent learning. This finding supports Siemens' (2006) beliefs that learning is a complex process by which learners need to rely on technology to store and receive knowledge. Learners also benefited from peer and mentor's feedback. The teachers were supportive and patient with their learners which encouraged learners to continue on their learning. It is essential that the tutor maintain a supportive environment for learners in order to keep them involved in the learning process.

However, Suryatiningsih's (2018) and Baraka's (2021) articles had opposing outcomes when it comes to the use of online learning to promote autonomy. The former concluded that the use of the system "Sistem Pembelajaran Online Terpadu (SPOT) in web based education had resulted in a negative perception of online learning. Learners were not satisfied with the system as it was not optimal to use. They perceived it as an uninteresting way of delivering lessons. It also discouraged them from engaging in learning. Furthermore learners did not implement any techniques to enhance their learning. This does not go in favor of the quality of an autonomous learner. In terms of scaffolding, learners did not receive clarifications which hindered learners' satisfaction and learning. The use of web based learning is a form of technology based approach. This latter provides learners' with opportunities to learn at ease. Yet, in this study the use of web-based seemed not to be successful. It failed to account for learners' motivation and ease their path to have a better atmosphere to develop learners autonomy. Any technical issue could occur such as being disrupted when accessed through the phone and lack of visual aids and slow access. This makes learners stressed, unmotivated and prevents the learning process (Cook, 2007). This outcome proves the validity of the four suggested constraints by Jones (2001); namely the lack of technical support and learners' ICT skills and the learners' low enthusiasm decreases their engagement in learning and accomplishing tasks.

The latter reveals that most of the informants agree that the use of the ICT tools is very effective in their learning because computers save time and effort and their computer is appropriate to language learning activities. Most importantly, they approve that the Internet makes them autonomous learners. Surprisingly, the study reveals two significant truths: the learners' high awareness about the effectiveness of the Internet to boost their autonomous learning skills, and their readiness to be autonomous. However, the results also show that teachers remain loyal to the spoon-feeding strategy and are not doing much to promote their learners' autonomy. In this same respect, the respondents are unable to make up their minds about two issues: first, whether they prefer learning from teachers or from the Internet and second if computers encourage unethical practices.

Technology is used in both articles. Nonetheless, it appears that it was not tackled properly. Promoting learners autonomy relies on how technology-based approaches are used in EFL classrooms. Benson (2001) advocates the idea: “a great deal depends on the ways in which technologies are made available to the learners and the kinds of interaction that take place around them” (p.140). Therefore, these approaches need to be implemented efficiently by teachers and learners with adequate lessons that meet the learners’ needs, styles and learning objectives. Learners should be responsible in their learning and to not rely on the teachers only since online learning requires the efforts of both. The use of approaches needs to elevate learners to be independent in making suitable decisions when it comes to their learning. Moreover, teachers’ support is required to help learners use the online tools and guide them in achieving autonomy. It is said that the latter is self-dependency. Yet, this does not eliminate teachers from helping learners to achieve autonomy using the appropriate methods. Stevens (2007) argues that “teachers who practise autonomy in their own professional development increase the likelihood of producing potentially autonomous and lifelong learners” (p.28).

Therefore, if teachers practise autonomy, their learners will be motivated and well equipped with this skill. Using technology is an innovative method by which learners need to exhibit positive attitudes and master skills that enable them to learn efficiently. This also heavily depends on the environment created by teachers as Little (1995) claims “teacher autonomy to be prerequisite to learner autonomy” (p.78). Thus, the teachers’ role is undeniable in order to achieve autonomy in language learning and they need to be trained and prepared to support learners.

In conclusion, this part contained a synopsis and a critical analysis of the four articles starting from the overview of each article, comparing and contrasting the findings and finally discussing them in relation to concepts and theories developed in the theoretical background. The emphasis of section two has been on the discussion of the findings and how they answered the research problem.

General Conclusion

The process of teaching and learning English has shifted to up-to-date processes and imported various instructional technological modes such as online learning as well as the use of learner-centered approaches. In this secondary research, it has been strived to not only study the relationship between autonomy and online learning but also to analyze the different attempts to promote it. This study compared and contrasted four articles from different pedagogical and geographical contexts. It also elucidates the importance of using certain techniques by the instructors to raise awareness of their learners' to be more autonomous and self-directed. They all revealed that learner autonomy which is according to Moore (1997) “the extent to which in the teaching/learning relationship it is the learner rather than the teacher who determines the goals, the learning experiences, and the evaluation decisions of the learning program” (p. 6) is paramount to the success of learners in online learning.

The dissertation is divided into two parts, the theoretical background including the literature review and the empirical studies. On the one hand, the first part has given an overall view about autonomy in online learning. It has equally indicated the different studies that were conducted by different researchers to promote autonomy of EFL learners. On the other hand, the empirical part stressed the relevant attempts to unfold the implementation of a modern approach of instruction as well as to demonstrate its efficacy and outcomes in different contexts.

The analysis revealed that the four articles have distinct results in terms of the choice of the teaching /learning tools, the methods of instructing and scaffolding the learners as well as the attitudes and beliefs of learners alongside with their instructors. This investigation would highly contribute to the development of online English learning in Algeria. The implementation of this model of learning evidently leads to changes in the roles of both teachers and learners through the shift towards a more learner centered approach. Thus, due to the contribution of network technology, promoting autonomy in online learning is starting to take a greater interest in different aspects of education.

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Abstract in Arabic

ملخص

ادى الظهور الواسع للتكنولوجيا الى استخدام النهج الحديثة لتسهيل التعلم. تحاول الدراسة الحالية مقارنة أربعة مقالات تناولت تعزيز استقلالية المتعلم في التعلم عبر التعليم الالكتروني ، فضلاً عن تسليط الضوء على أهمية هذه المهارة التعليمية الفرعية. المشاركون في المقالات هم متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية مع خلفيات جغرافية مختلفة. المنهجيات التي تم استخدامها هي الأساليب النوعية والكمية ودراسة الحالة. أظهرت النتائج أن التعليم الالكتروني يعزز استقلالية المتعلمين عند استخدام الأساليب والتقنيات مثل السنادات بشكل صحيح رغم هذا بينت نتائج الدراسات عن سوء في استعمال هاته الأدوات ونقص في توفير سنادات المعلمين كما اظهرت انه هنالك نقص في وعي المتعلمين و انخفاض في حالتهم النفسية . بناءً على هذا ، تمت مقارنة المقالات الأربعة من حيث النتائج الرئيسية المتوصل إليها. في نهاية هذه الدراسة، تم توفير بيانات مفيدة حول الموضوع لفهم آثار تعزيز استقلالية المتعلمين والأسباب التي قد تسبب الفشل في تحقيق هذا الهدف. قد يساعد هذا معلمي اللغة في اتخاذ التدابير المناسبة لمساعدة الطلاب على تعزيز استقلاليتهم وإيجاد الطرق المناسبة التي يمكن تنفيذها في المستقبل القريب.

الكلمات الرئيسية: استقلالية المتعلم, اقسام اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية ,التعلم الالكتروني,التكنولوجيا

