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Exploring Libyan EFL Teachers' Learner AutonomyStrategies in the Classroom:
Students' Perspectives

Abstract

This study aims to identifythe learner autonomy strategies used by Libyan EFL teachers in the classroom and the barriers to self-led learning experienced by Libyan EFL postgraduate students. A mixed-methods approach was adopted in which a structured questionnaire was administered to thirty-five EFL postgraduate students and sixpostgraduate students were interviewed. The findings revealed that teachers often conduct procedural and instructional activities to support autonomous learning among students in the classroom. However, teachers' support for students' internal motivation and metacognitive awareness of autonomy remain limited. The findings also demonstrated that students face affective challenges, pedagogical/Instructional challenges, cognitive and metacognitive challenges, and self-regulated challenges when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. The study suggested that future instructional interventions might be required to enhance teacher strategies that promote students' self-regulation and motivation as integral components of learner autonomy and to equip students with learning strategies to deal with these challenges.

Key Words: **Learner autonomy, Learner Autonomy strategies, Self-LeadLearning challenges, Teacher-Led Instruction, EFL Teachers, EFL Students**

1. Introduction

Teacher-led instruction has become aprominent feature of EFL teaching in Libya. EFL learners are often engaged in limited learning opportunities where they are led by their teachers

29   throughout the learning process. As a result, learners' acquisition of knowledge and linguistic

30   skills remain insufficient to equip them with the required language competencies. The necessity

31   of fostering learner autonomy among EFL students is highly significant as it enables them to be

32   self-directed learners and take responsibility for their own learning. This type of learning

33   promotes self-led learning through which learners are engaged in the learning process more

34   effectively and interactively. Helping EFL learners to be autonomous is one of the fundamental

35   requirements of EFL teachers as well as educational institutions. According to Little (2007),

36   learners will acquire plenty of benefit from autonomous learning as they are involved in

37   decision-making related to their learning, making it more meaningful and purposeful.

38   EFL teachersundoubtedly play a key role in enhancing learner autonomy inside the classroom.

39   They can guide EFL learners to get involved in planning, reflecting on and developing their

40   learning. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) asserted that learner autonomy in foreign language

41   learning is largely determined by teacher's beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy.

42   Although learner autonomy and its implications for teaching and learning have been investigated

43   at many educational institutions, this areahas receivedinsufficient attention in the Libyan higher

44   education context. Hence, it is significant to investigatestudents'attitudes towards their teachers'

45   practices of learner autonomy as well as challenges they face when transitioning from teacher-

46   led instruction to self-led learning. This study will explorestudents' attitudes towardsteachers'

47   learner autonomystrategies in the EFL Classroom. The study will also identify the challenges

48   students face duringtransitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning.

49   **2. Research Objectives**

50   **The present study aims to:**

51   1-. Explore Libyan EFL Teachers' learner autonomy strategies in the classroom.

52 2- Identify the challenges Libyan EFL students face when transitioning from teacher-led

53 instruction to self-led learning.

54 **3. Research Questions**

55 Q1. What learner autonomystrategies do EFL teachers employ in the classroom to foster leaner

56 autonomy?

57 Q2. What challenges do students face when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led

58 learning?

59 **4. Literature Review**

60 **4.1 Definition of Learner Autonomy**

61 Learner autonomy has been defined by many scholars and linguists. Holec (1981), who

62 considered as a pioneer in explaining self-directed learning concept, defined learner autonomy as

63 the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning (Benson, 2006). In his definition of

64 learner autonomy, Holec emphasized the significance of learners' ability and responsibility for

65 making decisions and plans regarding their own learning. Similarly, in EFL context, Oxford

66 (2003) defined learner autonomy as learners' ability to engage in critical reflection and self-

67 regulation through which learners employ learning strategies such as self-evaluation, practicing

68 independently, managing time and effort, goal setting, planning, and self-monitoring.

69 Autonomous learning was also defined as a process in which leaners control ana manage their

70 own learning process (Benson, 2001; Harmer, 2008; Healy, 2007). Together, the definitions

71 indicate that learner autonomy concept centers around self-regulation and reflection by which

72 learners build up the capacity for self-directed learning rather than relying solely on knowledge

73 provided by educators and peers. Indeed, Learner autonomy is not a teaching or learning method;

74 rather, it is a learning style adopted by independent and reflective learners to manage, plan,

75 analyze and reflect on their own language learning process.

76 **4.2 Importance of Learner autonomy and Students' Readiness in Language Learning**

77 Learner autonomy plays a key role in promoting language learning among EFL learners. It

78 serves as an effective driver encouraging lifelong learning and enables learners to extend their

79 language learning beyond the classroom. Including learner autonomy activities and strategies in

80 classroom can help learners become independent, reflective and accountable towards their

81 needs, styles, and goals (Qamar, 2016; Little, 2007). According to Oxford (2003), autonomy

82 leads to greater success or proficiency and helps teachers and learners make effective use of

83 limited teaching time.

84 Previous studies have reported a strong correlation between learner autonomy and academic

85 success, indicating that learners' academic performance improves as their autonomy increases.

86 Researchers have stated that the importance of autonomy in education lies in four aspects: (1)

87 enhancing lifelong learning, (2) developing learners' independence, (3) promoting self-

88 regulation and (4) helping learners benefit from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds

89 (Alrabai, 2017; Agustina , 2017; Tuo and Xia, 2017; Öztürk, 2019; Ahmadianzadeh et al., 2020;

90 Rahmasari, Munir, & Nugroho, 2025). Accordingly, learner autonomy is critical practice for

91 learners to accomplish academic and professional advancement in their careers.

92 While students have satisfactory knowledge of and attitudes toward learner autonomy, they are

93 unfamiliar with the idea of learner autonomy and lack the skills and competencies required to be

94 successful self-directed learners (Cirocki et al., 2019; Lin & Reinders, 2019; Fauzi et al. 2020;

95 Algwil, 2000). Therefore, teachers should increase EFL learners' awareness of learner

96 autonomy and its significance in language learning in terms of both quantity and quality.

97 Moreover, learners should be supported in developing their autonomous learning skills. Indeed,

98 learner autonomy is seen as a necessity rather than a desirable quality. EFL learners must be

99 more self-reliant and accountable for their learning and be able to make effective decisions about

100 their own learning. As a result, they can build their learning styles by challenging themselves

101 and experimenting with a variety of learning tools and resources.

102 **4.3 The Teacher's Role in Promoting Learner Autonomy**

103 Teachers play a fundamental role in promoting learner autonomy among EFL learners as they

104 are central to the teaching and learning process. Teachers' practices and strategies significantly

105 support students' learning behavior inside and outside the classroom because they serve as

106 guides, coordinators, facilitators, sources of information and assessors (Alonazi, 2017; Reeve,

107 2016; Yule, 2010). Therefore, fostering learning autonomy should be an integral part of teachers'

108 professional responsibilities and be incorporated in formal instruction. Creating an learner

109 autonomy-based environment by the teacher, through listening to learners' ideas and providing

110 them with autonomy-based learning opportunities, building learners' motivational skills, and

111 encouraging freedom of choice, can foster learning responsibility among students and result in

112 improved intrinsic motivation, fruitful learning outcomes, and academic success (Ryan and Deci,

113 2017; Xu, 2015; Almusharraf, 2020; Han, 2021).

114 The previous studies reported that teachers are key players in creating learner autonomy-

115 supportive environments by encouraging learners to (1) set their learning goals, (2) monitor their

116 learning progress , (3) use learner-generated content, and (4) decide on their self-directed

117 strategies. Similarly, In EFL context, the literature indicates that EFL teachers can help leaners

118 enhance their autonomous characteristics, such as self-regulation, persistent, resourceful, and

119 initiatives-taking, through increasing EFL learners awareness of available knowledge

120 resources , creating opportunities for natural and creative learning and encouraging them to

121 take initiative in constructing their knowledge (Han, 2021; Alonazi, 2017; Lin & Reinders,

122 2018; Pekkanlı, 2009).

123 According to the literature, teachers play a critical role in fostering learner autonomy in

124 classroom through employing creative instructional strategies encouraging lifelong learning

125 skills among learners.

126 **4.4 Autonomous Learning Strategies in EFL Classrooms**

127 Teachers always adopt specific strategies to foster leaner autonomy inside and outside

128 classroom. The primary goal of this practice is to help EFL learners to become independent, self-

129 directed, self-motivated, creative and reflective learners. Several learner autonomy models have

130 been suggested to help learner enhance their autonomy. For instance, Bett and Kercher (1999)

131 proposed employing the Autonomous Learning Model (ALM) that composes five dimensions

132 including orientation, individual development, enrichment, seminars and in-depth study. During

133 the orientation process, learners learn about autonomous learning strategies. In the Individual

134 Development stage, learners begin improving skills, concepts, and attitudes that they need to

135 become lifelong learners. During Enrichment phase, students begin searching and learning

136 knowledge out of the prescribed curriculum. In Seminars, learners reveal their ability as

137 autonomy learners.

138 Other strategies have been also proposed that teachers can use to support learner autonomy in the

139 EFL classroom. These strategies include creating self-report or learning diaries, motivation,

140 using portfolios and reflective journals, and using Technology. Such effective strategies are

141 fruitful for promoting autonomy learning by which students can identify the learning goals and

142 outcomes, monitor their own learning progress and access information from various sources (Al-

143 Husban & Tawalbeh, 2023; Daflizar et al., 2022; Khadawardi, 2025; Rahmasari , et al. 2025;

144 Alrabai, 2017; Işık and Balçıkanlı, 2020;).

145 In addition, University teachers integrated autonomy-supportive strategies such as negotiated

146 goals and scaffolding) to promote learner independence and to enhance a safe and fertile learning

147 environment in which "language learners play the role of active seekers of knowledge rather than

148 passive learners, allowing them to be fully involved in the learning process without extensive

149 educator direction and control" (Chen, 2020). Similarly, Student-centered tasks, classroom

150 activities, teacher roles as facilitators, and collaborative learning (e.g., peer groups and library

151 activities), self-directed tasks (e.g., encouraging student decision-making) are used by EFL

152 teachers to cultivate autonomy among learners.   (Nguyen & Yen, 2022; Chang,2020;

153 Suraratdecha & Tayjasanant, 2016; & Najmeh et al., 2015). Indeed, there are numerous learner

154 autonomy strategies adopted by EFL teachers to help their learners take responsibility for their

155 own learning and become proactive learners. This type of learner-centered instruction (creates a

156 productive learning environment in which learners actively contribute to and take the lead in

157 their learning in more meaningful and creative ways.

158 **4.5 Barriers to Learner Autonomy**

159 Transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning is a challenging practice. The

160 previous studies have revealed that EFL students encounter several challenges when engaging in

161 learner autonomy. For instance, Bounemeur and Rouabah (2023) found that Algerian EFL

162 students faced internal and external obstacles, such as lack of books in libraries and internet

163 ,lack of time management, laziness, pessimistic students, lack of skills and sources and lack of

164 teachers' support, in their attempts to build up their autonomy in terms of learning. Cid (2025)

165 reported that teachers consider students' readiness levels for learner autonomy, digital and

166 structural barriers to engagement, motivational issues, and increased workload as key challenges

167 for fostering self-directed learning among Chilean EFL students. Didane (2025) reported that

168 internet distraction, lack of social interaction, and lack of motivation are the dominant factors

169 that hinder students from establishing learning autonomy in an EFL context at Algerian

170 universities.

171 In addition, Alibakhshi (2015) stated that lack of motivation among learners, learners'

172 dependence on the teacher, learners' limited exposure to English, learners' focus on test results,

173 learners' lack of experience in autonomous learning, lack of appropriate needs analysis and

174 learners' inability in self-study activities were among the main challenges Iranian EFL students

175 faced when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. Tran (2020) reported

176 that although participants were cognitively aware of the importance of learner autonomy in

177 English vocabulary learning, they demonstrated low affective and behavioral engagement in

178 autonomous learning activities in EFL contexts. Volya et al. (2025) found in their study at

179 private university in China that participants demonstrated moderately high levels of autonomy,

180 particularly in understanding instructional objectives and setting personal study plans. However,

181 they faced challenges in aligning their personal learning goals with formal syllabi and continuing

182 independent learning beyond curricular demands.

183 Similarly, A shortage of time, felt mentally and physically overwhelmed by the blended tasks, a

184 lack of support and timely feedback from teachers and teachers' supervision were the main

185 challenges faced by Chinese students in blended learning courses (Cao, Jeyaraj & Razali, 2024).

186 The limited support fromteachers for students' intrinsic motivation and metacognitive skills is

187 also a challenge that impedes students' progressiontowards self-led learning (Alrabai, 2017;

188 Engler, 2024; Brandisauskiene et al., 2022). As can be seen, EFL students encounter several

189 challenges when engaging in autonomous learning. These challenges vary across contexts and

190 may be effective, instructional, behavioral or cognitive in nature. Moreover, although students

191 are aware of learner autonomy and may possess self-directed skill, they often encounter

192 difficulties transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning.

193 **5. Research Methodology**

194 **5.1 Research Method**

195 A mixed-methods research design was adopted to obtain a detailed and comprehensive

196 exploration of Libyan EFL students' attitudes towards teachers' learner autonomy strategies in

197 the EFL classroom as well as the challenges they face when transitioning from teacher-led

198 instruction to self-led learning. This approach is ideally suitable for the present study, as it

199 combines multiple research strategies that can provide deeper and more comprehensive

200 conclusions about the research problem (Dornyei, 2007). In the quantitative phase, a structured

201 questionnaire was administered to thirty-five Libyan EFL postgraduate-levelstudents to identify

202 their attitudes towards teachers' learner autonomy strategies in the EFL classroom. In the

203 qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with sixLibyan EFL postgraduate-

204 level studentsto gather in-depth insights into their perspectives of the challenges they face when

205 transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. A multilevel sampling method was

206 employed to select the participant. Thirty-five participants were selected randomly for the

207 quantitative phasewhile six participants wereselected purposively for the qualitative phase.

208 **6. Data Analysis and Reporting**

209 **6.1 Structured Questionnaire Results**

210 In the present study, a mixed-methods research design was used to address answers to the research

211 questions. Both semi-structured interviews and a structured questionnaire were adopted as data collection

212 tools to collect information on challenges faced by leaders and EFL teachers at Libyan higher vocational

213 and technical institutes when using E-learning. The questionnaire was designed according to the Likert

214 scale (see table 1) in which respondents can determine their level of agreement to the questionnaire

215 statements in five points: (1) never; (2) rarely; (3) sometimes, (4) often, (5) always.

Scale Weight	Level of Agreement	Weighted Average
1	Never	From 1 to 1.8
2	Rarely	From 1.81 to 2.59
3	Sometimes	From 2.6 to 3.39
4	Often	From 3.4 to 4.19
5	Always	From 4.20 to 5

216 *Table 1: weighted average values of the Levels of Agreement on Likert Scale*

217 The weighted average values of the Levels of Agreement on the Likert Scale describe the

218 following:

219 1. A mean score ranging from 1-1.79 indicates strong disagreement withthe questionnaire
220   item(s).
221 2. A mean score ranging from 1.8 – 2.59 indicates disagreement withthe questionnaire
222   item(s) .
223 3. A mean score ranging from 2.6 – 3.39 indicates neutral or average agreement with the
224   questionnaire item(s).
225 4. A mean score ranging from 3.40 – 4.19 indicates agreement with the questionnaire
226   item(s).
227 5. A mean score ranging from 4.20 – 5 indicates strong agreement with the questionnaire
228   item(s).
229
230 **a. Teachers' Learner Autonomy Strategies in the EFL Classroom**

231 **Q1.** *What learner autonomy strategies do EFL teachers employ in the classroom to foster leaner*

232 *autonomy?*

233 The overall weighted mean average across all items is M = 3.54, PAL = %73 corresponding to the

234 "Often" category (see table 1 & 2. This suggests that, on average, students confirm that teachers often

235 implement strategies that support learner autonomy.

Items	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Missing	Mean	Percentage of Agreement Level (PAL)
Teachers guide us to set up our learning objectives.	1	1	12	7	13	2	3.88	78%
Teachers provide chances for students to propose questions dealing with given topics.	1	2	12	10	11	-	3.78	74%
Teachers facilitate students to do exercises dealing with language competence based on the topic.	1	3	11	11	9	1	3.69	74%
Teachers give individual or group tasks after learning a topic.	2	3	10	13	6	2	3.53	71%
Teachers inform students about the topic and anything that needs to be prepared for the next meeting.	1	3	13	7	12		3.72	74%
Teachers increase students' awareness about the importance of being autonomous for their own learning.	2	7	12	9	6		3.28	66%
Teachers motivate students to be autonomous by giving reinforcement.	3	5	14	7	7		3.28	66%
Teachers assist students to identify their learning difficulties.	4	4	12	8	8		3.33	67%
Teachers engage students in activities that encourage them to find a wide range of knowledge resources related to course content.	4	5	10	9	8		3.33	67%
Teachers organize different kinds of teaching materials including blended learning to create opportunities for students to construct their own knowledge.	3	4	14	2	13		3.50	70%
Teachers organize different kinds of strategies to create opportunities for learners to learn creatively.	4	3	11	8	10		3.47	69%
The teacher organizes different kinds of activities that support students to take their own initiatives in constructing their knowledge.	3	4	10	9	8	2	3.44	69%
Teachers organize different kinds of strategies to create opportunities for learners to learn independently and clearly understand their responsibilities before doing the tasks.	0	7	6	19	14		3.83	77%
							3.54	73.23%

236 *Table 2: Statistical Descriptive Analysis of Questionnaire Data*

237 The item -"Teachers guide us to set up our learning objectives" - received the highest rate with a mean of

238 M = 3.88and agreement level of 78%, indicating a strong intention among teachers to engage learners in

239 setting their own learning goals. Likewise, the item-"Teachers organize different kinds of strategies to

240 create opportunities for learners to learn independently and clearly understand their responsibilities before

241 doing the tasks" – was also highly rated (M = 3.83with 77% agreement level),highlighting teachers'

242 tendency topromote learner responsibility and independence.

243 In addition, Among the highly rated items were "Teachers facilitate students to do exercises dealing with

244 language competence based on the topic", "Teachers provide chances for students to propose questions

245 dealing with given topics", "Teachers inform students with the topic and anything that needs to be

246 prepared for the next meeting", and "Teachers give individual or group tasks after learning a topic".

247 These items received mean scores of M= 3.78 (agreement level= 74%), M=3.72 (agreement level =74%)

248 and M=3.69 (agreement level= 74%) respectively.

249 Conversely, the items "Teachers increase students' awareness about the importance of being autonomous

250 for their own learning", "Teachers motivate students to be autonomous by giving reinforcement",

251 "Teachers assist students to identify their learning difficulties and, "Teachers engage students in activities

252 that encourage them to find a wide range of knowledge resources related to course content" received the

253 lowest mean scores of M = 3.28 (agreement level of 66%), M = 3.28 (agreement level of 66%), M=3.33

254 (agreement level of 67%) M= 3.33 (agreement level of 67%) falling within the "Sometimes" category.

255 These results indicatethat while teachers provide procedural and instructional support for promoting

256 learner autonomy, they consistently provide students with limited motivational and attitudinal support.

257 To sum up, the findings demonstratedthat while teachers often conduct procedural and instructional

258 activities to support autonomous learning, teachers' support for students' internal motivation and

259 metacognitive awareness of autonomy remain constantly limited. Future instructional interventions might

260 be required to enhance teacher strategies that promote students' self-regulation and motivation as integral

261 components of learner autonomy.

6.2 Semi-Structured Interview Results

The thematic view analysis to draw a conclusion about the research problem. The components of the analysis were determined by the participants' responses obtained from the semi-structured interviews. The researcher analyses the data according to his understanding of the participants' responses.

a. Challenges faced by EFL Students During the Transition from Teacher-Led Instruction to Self-Led Learning

Q2. What challenges do students face when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning?

Findings revealed several challenges faced by EFL students when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. According to the data, Students initially experienced affective challenges, instructional challenges, cognitive and metacognitive challenges and self-regulated challenges. Among affective challenges are stress, feeling overwhelmed, anxiety and low self-efficacy (low self-confidence. The findings showed that such factors were challenging and influenced students' motivation, emotional readiness, and persistence to learn independently. As for instructional challenges, loss of direct teacher support and instructions and lack of immediate teachers' feedback increased their uncertainty and difficulty learning new knowledge. The cognitive and metacognitive challenges involve constant monitoring, fear of understanding learned knowledge and insufficient self-directed learning skills. These challenges reflect difficulties students face in comprehending and self-monitoring new knowledge and planning and evaluating their own learning. As for the self-regulated challenges, students lack self-regulated skills related to managing distractions and maintaining focus. The lack of such skills reduced their engagement in tasks and learning efficiency.

Affective Challenges	Pedagogical/Instructional Challenges	cognitive and metacognitive challenges	self-regulated challenges
• Stress • Feeling Overwhelmed	• loss of direct teacher support. • Instructions and lack of	• Constant monitoring Fear of understanding	• Difficulty managing distractions

	immediate teachers' feedback.	learned knowledge • Insufficient self-directed learning skills	• Difficulty maintaining focus
• Low Confidence			

Table 3: Challenges faced by Students in Learner Autonomy Transition

Thus, future instructional interventions might be required to enhance teacher strategies that equip students with learning strategies to address these challenges.

7. Discussion

The study aims to explore Libyan EFL Teachers' learner autonomy strategies in the classroom and to identify the challenges Libyan EFL students face when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. Consistent with previous research (Chen, 2020; Nguyen & Yen, 2022; Chang,2020; Suraratdecha & Tayjasanant, 2016; & Najmeh et al., 2015), Libyan EFL teachers often employ procedural and instructional strategies to promote learner autonomy among students in the classroom. However, the study found that teachers' support for students' internal motivation and metacognitive awareness of autonomy remains limited. This result is compatible with Alrabai (2017), Engler (2024) and Brandisauskiene et al. (2022) who found that teachers support forstudents' intrinsic motivation and metacognitive skills was limited. In addition, in agreement with previous studies (Bounemeur and Rouabah, 2023; Cid, 2025; Didane, 2025; Alibakhshi, 2015; Tran, 2020; Volya et al. 2025; Cao, Jeyaraj & Razali, 2024), Libyan EFL students face affective challenges, pedagogical/Instructional challenges, cognitive and metacognitive challenges, and self-regulated challenges when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. These findings are significant as it highlights key learner autonomy strategies and practices implemented byLibyan EFL teachers in the classroom. They also identify the main challenges facedby students during the transition from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. These resultshave implications for enhancing the role of educators and higher education institutions in fostering and managing learner autonomy in language education in Libya.

8. Conclusion

The study aims to investigate Libyan EFL Teachers' learner autonomy strategies in the classroom and identify the challenges Libyan EFL students face when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. To address the first research question, the findings revealed that teachers often employ procedural and instructional activities to support autonomous learning among students in the classroom. On the other hand, teachers' support for students' internal motivation and metacognitive awareness of autonomy remain insufficient. In relation to the second research question, the findings demonstrated that students face affective challenges, pedagogical/Instructional challenges, cognitive and metacognitive challenges, and self-regulated challenges when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. The importance of the study lies in the implications it suggests for enhancing the role of educators and higher education institutions in fostering and managing learner autonomy in language education in Libya.The study also suggests that future instructional interventions might be required to enhance teacher strategies that promote students' self-regulation and motivation as integral components of learner autonomy and to equip students with learning strategies to deal with these challenges.

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