## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## EXPLORING LIBYAN EFL TEACHERS' LEARNER AUTONOMYSTRATEGIES IN THE CLASSROOM: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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## *Abstract*

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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 undergraduate students. A mixed-methods approach was adopted in which a structured questionnaire was administered to thirty five EFL undergraduate students and six EFL un dergraduate 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 challe nges,cognitive and metacognitive challenges,and self regulated challen ges when transitioning from teacher led instruction to self led learning. The study suggested that future instructional interventions might be req uired to enhance teacher strategies that promote students'self-regulation and motivation as integral components of learner autonomy and to equi p students with learning strategies to deal with these challenges.

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## 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 throughout the learning process. As a result, learners' acquisition of knowledge and linguistic skills remain insufficient to equip them with the required language competencies. The necessity of fostering learner autonomy among EFL students is highly significant as it enables them to be self-directed learners and take responsibility for their own learning. This type of learning promotes self-led learning through which learners are engaged in the learning process more effectively and interactively. Helping EFL learners to be autonomous is one of the fundamental requirements of EFL teachers as well as educational institutions. According to Little (2007), learners will acquire plenty of benefit from autonomous learning as they are involved in decision-making related to their learning, making it more meaningful and purposeful. EFL teachersundoubtedly play a key role in enhancing learner autonomy inside the classroom. They can guide EFL learners to get involved in planning, reflecting on and developing their learning. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) asserted that learner autonomy in foreign language learning is largely determined by teacher's beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy. Although learner autonomy and its implications for teaching and learning have been

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investigated at many educational institutions, this areahasreceivedinsufficient attention in the Libyan higher education context. Hence, it is significant to investigatestudents'attitudes towards their teachers' practices of learner autonomy as well as challenges they face when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. This study will explorestudents' attitudes towardsteachers' learner autonomystrategies in the EFL Classroom. The study will also identify the challenges students face duringtransitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning.

## Research Objectives:-
**The present study aims to:**
1-. Explore Libyan EFL Teachers' learner autonomy strategies in the classroom.
2- Identify the challenges Libyan EFL students face when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning.

## Research Questions:-
Q1. What learner autonomystrategies do EFL teachers employ in the classroom to foster leaner autonomy?
Q2. What challenges do students face when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning?

## Literature Review:-
### Definition of Learner Autonomy:-
Learner autonomy has been defined by many scholars and linguists. Holec (1981), who considered as a pioneer in explaining self-directed learning concept, defined learner autonomy as the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning  (Benson, 2006). In his definition of learner autonomy, Holec emphasized the significance of learners' ability and responsibility  for making decisions and plans regarding their own learning. Similarly, in EFL context, Oxford (2003) defined learner autonomy as learners' ability to engage in critical reflection and self-regulation through which learners employ learning strategies such as self-evaluation, practicing independently, managing time and effort, goal setting, planning, and self-monitoring. Autonomous learning was also defined as a process in which leaners  control ana manage  their own learning process (Benson, 2001; Harmer, 2008; Healy, 2007). Together, the definitions indicate that learner autonomy concept centers around  self-regulation and reflection by which learners build up the capacity for self-directed learning rather than relying solely on knowledge provided by educators and peers. Indeed, Learner autonomy is not a teaching or learning method; rather, it is a learning style adopted by independent and reflective learners to manage, plan, analyze and reflect on their own language learning process.

### Importance of Learner autonomy and Students' Readiness in Language Learning:-
Learner autonomy plays a key role in promoting  language learning among EFL learners. It serves as an effective driver encouraging lifelong learning and enables learners to extend their language learning beyond the classroom. Including learner autonomy activities and strategies in classroom can help learners become independent, reflective and accountable towards their  needs, styles, and goals (Qamar, 2016; Little, 2007). According to Oxford (2003), autonomy leads to greater success or proficiency and helps teachers and learners make effective use of limited teaching time. Previous studies have reported  a strong correlation between learner autonomy and academic success, indicating that learners' academic performance improves as their autonomy increases. Researchers have stated that the importance of autonomy in education lies in four aspects: (1) enhancing  lifelong learning, (2) developing learners' independence, (3) promoting self-regulation and (4) helping learners benefit from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds (Alrabai, 2017; Agustina , 2017; Tuo and Xia, 2017; Öztürk, 2019; Ahmadianzadeh et al., 2020; Rahmasari, Munir, & Nugroho, 2025). Accordingly,  learner autonomy is critical practice for learners to accomplish academic and professional advancement in their careers.

While students have satisfactory knowledge of and attitudes toward learner autonomy, they are unfamiliar with the idea of learner autonomy and lack the skills and competencies required to be successful self-directed learners (Cirocki et al., 2019;  Lin  & Reinders, 2019; Fauzi et al. 2020; Algwil, 2000 ). Therefore, teachers should increase EFL learners' awareness of learner autonomy and its significance in language learning in terms of both quantity and quality.  Moreover, learners should be supported in developing their autonomous learning skills. Indeed, learner autonomy is seen as a necessity rather than a desirable quality. EFL learners must be more self-reliant and accountable for their learning and be able to make effective decisions about their own learning. As a result,  they can build their learning styles by challenging themselves and experimenting with a variety of learning tools and resources.

### The Teacher's Role in Promoting Learner Autonomy:-

Teachers play a fundamental role in promoting learner autonomy among EFL learners as they are central to the teaching and learning process. Teachers' practices and strategies significantly support students' learning behavior inside and outside the classroom because they serve as guides, coordinators, facilitators, sources of information and assessors (Alonazi, 2017; Reeve, 2016; Yule, 2010). Therefore, fostering learning autonomy should be an integral part of teachers' professional responsibilities and be incorporated in formal instruction. Creating an learner autonomy-based environment by the teacher, through listening to learners' ideas and providing them with autonomy-based learning opportunities, building learners' motivational skills, and encouraging freedom of choice, can foster learning responsibility among students and result in improved intrinsic motivation, fruitful learning outcomes, and academic success (Ryan and Deci, 2017; Xu, 2015; Almusharraf, 2020; Han, 2021).

The previous studies reported that teachers are key players in creating learner autonomy-supportive environments by encouraging learners to (1) set their learning goals, (2) monitor their learning progress , (3) use learner-generated content, and (4) decide on their self-directed strategies. Similarly, In EFL context, the literature indicates that EFL teachers can help leaners enhance their autonomous characteristics, such as self-regulation, persistent, resourceful, and initiatives-taking, through increasing EFL learners awareness of available knowledge resources , creating opportunities for natural and creative learning and encouraging them to take initiative in constructing their knowledge (Han, 2021; Alonazi, 2017; Lin & Reinders, 2018; Pekkanlı, 2009).According to the literature, teachers play a critical role in fostering learner autonomy in classroom through employing creative instructional strategies encouraging lifelong learning skills among learners.

**Autonomous Learning Strategies in EFL Classrooms:-**
Teachers always adopt specific strategies to foster leaner autonomy inside and outside classroom. The primary goal of this practice is to help EFL learners to become independent, self-directed, self-motivated, creative and reflective learners. Several learner autonomy models have been suggested to help learner enhance their autonomy. For instance, Bett and Kercher (1999) proposed employing the Autonomous Learning Model (ALM) that composes five dimensions including orientation, individual development, enrichment, seminars and in-depth study. During the orientation process, learners learn about autonomous learning strategies. In the Individual Development stage, learners begin improving skills, concepts, and attitudes that they need to become lifelong learners. During Enrichment phase, students begin searching and learning knowledge out of the prescribed curriculum. In Seminars, learners reveal their ability as autonomy learners. Other strategies have been also proposed that teachers can use to support learner autonomy in the EFL classroom. These strategies include creating self-report or learning diaries, motivation, using portfolios and reflective journals, and using Technology. Such effective strategies are fruitful for promoting autonomy learning by which students can identify the learning goals and outcomes, monitor their own learning progress and access information from various sources (Al-Husban & Tawalbeh, 2023; Daflizar et al., 2022; Khadawardi, 2025; Rahmasari , et al. 2025; Alrabai, 2017; Işık and Balçıkanlı, 2020;).

In addition, University teachers integrated autonomy-supportive strategies such as negotiated goals and scaffolding) to promote learner independence and to enhance a safe and fertile learning environment in which "language learners play the role of active seekers of knowledge rather than passive learners, allowing them to be fully involved in the learning process without extensive educator direction and control" (Chen, 2020). Similarly, Student-centered tasks, classroom activities, teacher roles as facilitators, and collaborative learning (e.g., peer groups and library activities), self-directed tasks (e.g., encouraging student decision-making) are used by EFL teachers to cultivate autonomy among learners. (Nguyen & Yen, 2022; Chang,2020; Suraratdecha & Tayjasanant, 2016; & Najmeh et al., 2015 ). Indeed, there are numerous learner autonomy strategies adopted by EFL teachers to help their learners take responsibility for their own learning and become proactive learners. This type of learner-centered instruction ( creates a productive learning environment in which learners actively contribute to and take the lead in their learning in more meaningful and creative ways.

**Barriers to Learner Autonomy:-**
Transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning is a challenging practice. The previous studies have revealed that EFL students encounter several challenges when engaging in learner autonomy. For instance, Bounemeur and Rouabah (2023) found that Algerian EFL students faced internal and external obstacles, such as lack of books in libraries and internet ,lack of time management, laziness, pessimistic students, lack of skills and sources and lack of teachers' support, in their attempts to build up their autonomy in terms of learning. Cid (2025) reported that teachers consider students' readiness levels for learner autonomy, digital and structural barriers to engagement, motivational issues, and increased workload as key challenges for fostering self-directed learning

among Chilean EFL students. Didane (2025) reported that internet distraction, lack of social interaction, and lack of motivation are the dominant factors that hinder students from establishing learning autonomy in an EFL context at Algerian universities.

In addition, Alibakhshi (2015) stated that lack of motivation among learners, learners' dependence on the teacher, learners' limited exposure to English, learners' focus on test results, learners' lack of experience in autonomous learning, lack of appropriate needs analysis and learners' inability in self-study activities were among the main challenges Iranian EFL students faced when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. Tran (2020) reported that although participants were cognitively aware of the importance of learner autonomy in English vocabulary learning, they demonstrated low affective and behavioral engagement in autonomous learning activities in  EFL contexts. Volya et al. (2025) found in their study at private university in China that participants demonstrated moderately high levels of autonomy, particularly in understanding instructional objectives and setting personal study plans. However, they faced challenges in aligning their personal learning goals with formal syllabi and continuing independent learning beyond curricular demands.

Similarly, A shortage of time, felt mentally and physically overwhelmed by the blended tasks, a lack of support and timely feedback from teachers and teachers' supervision were the main challenges faced by Chinese students in blended learning courses (Cao,  Jeyaraj & Razali, 2024). The limited support fromteachers for students' intrinsic motivation and metacognitive skills is also a challenge that impedes students' progressiontowards self-led learning (Alrabai, 2017;  Engler, 2024; Brandisauskiene et al., 2022). As can be seen, EFL students encounter several challenges when engaging in autonomous learning. These challenges vary across contexts and may be effective, instructional, behavioral or cognitive in nature. Moreover, although students are aware of learner autonomy and may possess self-directed skill, they often encounter difficulties transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning.

## Research Methodology:-
### Research Method:-
A mixed-methods research design was adopted to obtain a detailed and comprehensive exploration of Libyan EFL students' attitudes towards teachers' learner autonomy strategies in the EFL classroom as well as the challenges they face when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. This approach is ideally suitable  for the present study, as it combines multiple research strategies that can provide deeper and more comprehensive conclusions about the research problem (Dornyei, 2007). In the quantitative phase, a structured questionnaire was administered to thirty-five Libyan EFL undergraduate-levelstudents to identify their attitudes towards teachers' learner autonomy strategies in the EFL classroom. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with sixLibyan EFL undergraduate graduate-level studentsto gather in-depth insights into their perspectives of the challenges they face when transitioning from teacher-led instruction to self-led learning. A multilevel sampling method was employed to select the participant. Thirty-five  participants were selected randomly for the quantitative phasewhile six participants wereselected purposively for the qualitative phase.

### Data Analysis and Reporting:-
### Structured Questionnaire Results:-
In the present study, a mixed-methods research design was used to address answers to the research questions. Both semi-structured interviews and a  structured questionnaire were adopted as data collection tools to collect information on challenges faced by leaders and EFL teachers at Libyan higher vocational and technical institutes when using E-learning. The questionnaire was designed according to the Likert scale (see table 1) in which respondents can determine their level of agreement to the questionnaire 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 |

**Table 1: weighted average values of the Levels of Agreement on Likert Scale**
**The weighted average values of the Levels of Agreement on the Likert Scale describe the following:**

1. A mean score ranging from 1-1.79 indicates strong disagreement withthe questionnaire item(s).
2. A mean score ranging from 1.8 – 2.59 indicates disagreement withthe questionnaire item(s) .
3. A mean score ranging from 2.6 – 3.39 indicates neutral or average agreement with the questionnaire item(s).
4. A mean score ranging from 3.40 – 4.19 indicates agreement with the questionnaire item(s).
5. A mean score ranging from 4.20 – 5 indicates strong agreement with the questionnaire item(s).

**Teachers' Learner Autonomy Strategies in the EFL Classroom:-**
**Q1. What learner autonomy strategies do EFL teachers employ in the classroom to foster leaner autonomy?**
The overall weighted mean average across all items is M = 3.54, PAL = %73 corresponding to the "Often" category (see table 1 & 2. This suggests that, on average, students confirm that teachers often 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% |

| | | | | | | | Mean | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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% |

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

The item -"Teachers guide us to set up our learning objectives" - received the highest rate with a mean of M = 3.88and agreement level of 78%, indicating a strong intention among teachers to engage learners in setting their own learning goals. Likewise, the item-"Teachers organize different kinds of strategies to create opportunities for learners to learn independently and clearly understand their responsibilities before doing the tasks" – was also highly rated (M = 3.83with 77% agreement level),highlighting teachers' tendency topromote learner responsibility and independence.

In addition, Among the highly rated items were "Teachers facilitate students to do exercises dealing with language competence based on the topic", "Teachers provide chances for students to propose questions dealing with given topics", "Teachers inform students with the topic and anything that needs to be prepared for the next meeting", and "Teachers give individual or group tasks after learning a topic". These items received mean scores of M= 3.78 (agreement level= 74%),  M=3.72 (agreement level =74%) and M=3.69 (agreement level= 74%) respectively. Conversely, the items "Teachers increase students' awareness about the importance of being autonomous for their own learning", "Teachers motivate students to be autonomous by giving reinforcement", "Teachers assist students to identify their learning difficulties and, "Teachers engage students in activities that encourage them to find a wide range of knowledge resources related to course content" received the lowest mean scores of M = 3.28 (agreement level of 66%), M = 3.28 (agreement level of 66%), M=3.33 (agreement level of 67%) M= 3.33 (agreement level of 67%) falling within the "Sometimes" category. These results indicatethat while teachers provide procedural and instructional support for promoting learner autonomy, they consistently provide students with limited motivational and attitudinal support.To sum up,  the findings demonstratedthat while teachers often conduct procedural and instructional activities to support autonomous learning, teachers' support for students' internal motivation and metacognitive awareness of autonomy remain constantly limited. Future instructional interventions might be required to enhance teacher strategies that promote students' self-regulation and motivation as integral components of learner autonomy.

**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.

**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<br>• Feeling Overwhelmed<br>• Low Confidence | • loss of direct teacher support.<br>• Instructions and lack of immediate teachers' feedback. | • Constant monitoring Fear of understanding learned knowledge<br>• Insufficient self-directed learning skills | • Difficulty managing distractions<br>• Difficulty maintaining focus |

**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.

## 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.

## 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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