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Abdrahmane Mira University of Bejaia
Faculty of Letters and languages
Department Of English

**Investigating the Impact of EFL Learners' Autonomy on Their
Oral Fluency Practice**

**Case of Second Year LMD Students, Department of English, University
of Bejaia**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master in
Language Didactics at the department of English, university of Bejaia.

The Board of Examiners

Examiner: Mrs. Sonia YAHMI- IMERZOUKENE

Supervisor: Mr. Chafa OUALI

President: Mrs. Linda KHENOUNE -GHOUT

Submitted by

Miss. Karima KADOUS

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Dedications



I dedicate this work to:

- *My dear parents*
- *My brothers Abdlouahab, Mohamed, Sherif and Abdlhalim*
- *My little sister Zoubida*
- *My eldest sister Merriam and her husband*
- *My brother's wife and her kids Hiba and Ahmed*
- *My best friend Chahira and to all my friends Asia, Fathma, Aicha, Mary, Zokzok, Hayet, jamila, Sono, Merriam, Samo, karima, Nachida, Radia, Warda and Hoda.*
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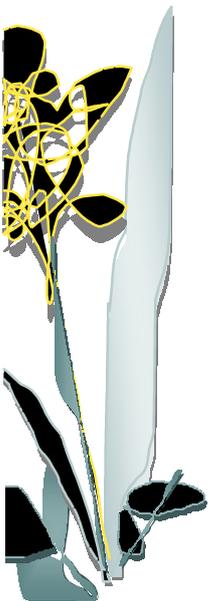
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Abstract

This research investigates the impact of learning autonomy on second year university EFL learners oral fluency practice at the department of English, University of Bejaia. The corner stone of this research is the huge literature found about the two variables of the theme and available data collection tools, the questionnaire and the observation which provide a great deal of information about the existing relation between autonomy and the learners oral fluency practices. This research paper is composed of two chapters, theoretical and practical. The findings show that language learners' autonomy is a factor among others increasing EFL learners' opportunities for an oral fluency practice. The conclusion drawn from this research is that autonomous learners may get more opportunities to develop their oral fluency through the implementation of some kind of oral fluency practices as oral project presentation, free talk activities and role plays.

Key words: Learning Autonomy, Oral Fluency Practice.

List of abbreviations

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

G: Group

L2 : Second language

LMD: Licence, Master, Doctorat

N °: Number

R: Room

SDL: Self-Directed Learning

Definitions of Terms

- **Autonomy** : Autonomy in language learning implies learners setting their own directions for learning that will lead to divergent outcomes, because the ultimate importance of foreign language learning is not the acquisition of a shared body of knowledge, but the ability to say what one wants to say in more than one language (Benson,2012: 37).
- **Communicative Strategies:** learners’ verbal and non-verbal means to resolve interactional problems, to negotiate meaning, to stay in the conversation and keep the channel of communication open (Ghout, 2012).
- **Oral Fluency Practice** : Those activities whose objective is communicative language use (Ur, 1991: 188).
- **Strategies:** they are the moment –by- moment techniques that we employ to solve “problems” posed by second language input and output’ (Brown,2001:122).

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Introduction

The changing view of language educators from the how to teach a language to how it is learned makes a shift of focus from a mere teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness classrooms. Therefore, a change in roles occurs with more responsibilities attributed to the learner for a best insurance that learning takes place. Thus, the main challenge that language teachers face is helping learners move toward becoming responsible for their own learning (Xhaferi, 2011). However, placing the learner at the centre of the learning process does not mean a total abdication of teachers' responsibilities in the classroom.

1-Statement of the problem

The reform of the Algerian higher educational system which took place in 2005, on what is known as the LMD system(Licence, Master, Doctorat) ,brings with it new visions on how things should be done in the classroom and who should do them as well i.e. that change of roles between teachers and learners. Not so far from the LMD system principles which require from learners to be actively involved in the learning process; language researchers advocating these new reforms seek for the establishment of the Competency – Based approach which sees learners' contributions crucial to their own learning. Therefore, the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) researcher Idri (2012) points out that a competency-Based approach, learner-centred approach and learning autonomy are among the core components of the LMD reform in Algeria; Moreover, she asserts that: *“Such factors are supposed to create a more autonomous generation that can be able to take charge of, or take responsibility for, or control over its own learning”*. People do not normally wake up to a fine day and find that they have become autonomous overnight, Therefore; developing autonomy require long lasting efforts. However, succeeding in developing EFL learners' autonomy in the Algerian context is one step towards successful learning.

Applied linguists, in their attempt to make the learner actively involved in the learning process, view learners' autonomy as a key to successful learning

as Benson (2001:1) asserts that “*autonomy is a precondition for effective learning*”. Therefore, language learning autonomy is seen as the corner stone of any successful learning. Thus, autonomy may serve for the EFL students’ success in learning a foreign language. This success, in turn, is regarded as the ability for an effective communication as the EFL researcher Ghout-Khenoun (2012) points out that: “*Nowadays, it is widely accepted that the main goal of learning a foreign language (FL) is to be able to communicate effectively*”. This landmark of the communicative language teaching approach (CLT) makes of communication a necessary goal to be reached. However, being able to communicate effectively in the target language requires from EFL learners a certain degree of fluency.

2-Research questions

As this research is concerned with the development of EFL learners’ oral fluency, it is important to investigate the alliance between EFL learners’ autonomy and their oral fluency practices in an oral class. Therefore, the main concern of the study is about how EFL learners’ autonomy can have an influence on their oral fluency practice. Furthermore, as autonomy may be seen from different pedagogical angles, it is necessary to investigate its positive effects on the EFL learners’ oral fluency. Moreover, this research tries to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1- How can EFL learners’ autonomy increase their opportunities for oral fluency practice?
- 2- To what extent does learners’ autonomy impact their oral fluency practice in the classroom?
- 3- What are the teaching techniques that teachers might implement in their oral classes to maximise the learners autonomous oral fluency practice?
- 4- To what extent does task type influence EFL students autonomy in an oral classroom?

3-Hypothesis

We hypothesise that EFL learners’ autonomous oral fluency practice will likely optimize their opportunities to develop their oral fluency.

4-Significance of the study

Numerous researches have been conducted on autonomy. The earliest studies on the theme investigated the origin of the concept and its effectiveness in learning a foreign language; but nowadays studies go further in searching for more effective teaching techniques to foster learners' autonomy in their classes. However, few researches investigate the relationship between autonomy and the learners oral fluency practice.

A large amount of literature was found about how to foster learners oral fluency (Derwing et al; 2004. Brown; 2003.Fillmore;1979). However, few researchers investigated the link between EFL learners' autonomy and their oral fluency practice in the classroom (Thornbury 2005). Therefore, this research theme is somehow innovative at the level of the idea itself and the context where the research is conducted in as well.

5-Aim of the study

The aim of this research is to see whether the lack of autonomy at Bejaia University's EFL oral classes is a reason behind the learners' failure to be fluent language users. Moreover; we are concerned in finding solutions to the lack of learners' autonomy in the oral classes and suggest some communicative teaching techniques to be implemented in the classroom to maximize the learners' opportunities to achieve oral fluency.

6-Population and Sample

This research is conducted with second year L5MD students of English at the University of Bejaia. Since it is impossible to work with that great number of students we have randomly chosen two groups in which the total number of students is about 85 students. Each group of our research participants is divided into two sub-groups taught by the same oral expression teacher. Moreover, second year EFL students have the opportunities to practice the English language in the classroom since the time devoted for this session is about three hours per week for each student.

6-Research Methodology

For the sake of getting more reliable data on our theme of inquiry we opt for the observation as a qualitative data collection tool ; which has taken two forms, informal and formal. The students questionnaires, a quantitative data collection tool, is used to overcome the lacks of our observation and get more reliable data about our theme.

7-Research paper description

This research paper is composed of two chapters each one is divided into two sections. The first chapter entitled ‘literature review’ is about the theoretical frame of our work. The first section of it is about learning autonomy, its definition, origin, related terms to it and different learning aspects revealing its importance. Besides, the second section of our first chapter is about oral fluency, definition, importance and other learning aspects related to it. The second chapter of this research is concerned with the practical side of it, therefore; the first section of it is about research methodology used in the span of this study while the second section is concerned with the research findings, recommendations and suggestions for further research. This research is ended with a general conclusion which encompasses the core components of this research.

Chapter I: Literature review

Section one: Learning Autonomy

Introduction

Autonomous language learning takes the lion's share on most foreign language researchers' agendas. Hence, the attempt to develop autonomy among EFL learners is still a matter of inquiry since there is no one clear understanding of what makes an autonomous language learner. Therefore, along this section, we strive to highlight the major definitions given to autonomy, and show its importance in learning English as a foreign language.

I.1. Definitions of Autonomy

There is no absolute agreement on what autonomy means; however, a great amount of literature is found in the field . Moreover, most learning autonomy' researchers agree that autonomy is no more about specific items determining its entity (Little, 1990; Benson, 2001; Snodin, 2013). For Snodin (2013:210) “ the term ‘learner autonomy’ encompasses many concepts”. Snodin's view is a clear explanation of why learner autonomy' researchers do not find a consensus definition holding all the characteristics of an autonomous learner.

Benson (2012:31) asserts that “we often use ‘learner autonomy’ as a kind of shorthand for ‘language learner autonomy’, foreign language teachers and researchers are mainly interested in the latter”. Therefore, along this research the two concepts are used as synonyms. Moreover, Cole-French and Mc Fadden (2012:3) point out that:

... as more educators became concerned with learner autonomy, the definition of it became multifaceted as teachers and researches alike sought ways to understand why some students functioned with greater autonomy than others

Cole-French and McFadden in their claim strengthen the idea of having no possibility of making all language researchers in the field of learning autonomy agree on one conception of autonomy .

Besides the previous claims, Benson (2001:) asserts that “*it is accepted that autonomy is a multidimensional capacity that will take different forms for different individuals , and even for the same individual in different contexts or at different times*” . This claim explains more the reason why there is no single definition of autonomy among all researchers in the field.

Cole-French, Mc Fadden, and Benson in their claim, agree that autonomy is not limited on one individual capacity rather than a set of individual capacities that vary as the learning contexts vary and as the language researcher’s move forward in their understanding of what autonomy in language learning is.

However, Snodin (2013), in his turn, asserts that even though learning autonomy researchers’ specific field of interest may differ, there is an agreement on the fundamental principles of learning autonomy. He further claims that:

Their [learning autonomy researchers] specific area of study may differ, but there is a consensus on the fundamental principles of autonomy i.e., learners take charge of, and become responsible for, their learning; they learn how to make their own decisions on what and how to learn; they understand their needs, they reflect on their learning critically; they maximize the opportunities to practice English inside and outside the classroom cited in (Snodin ,2013:2010)

This definition of what learning autonomy is, encompasses the main criteria that any language researcher on the field of autonomy, to some extent, agree on as representative to an autonomous language learner. Therefore, as EFL learners regarding autonomy as the key to their success of learning English as a foreign language, mainly in the Algerian context where English is learned in academic settings as a foreign language, learners have to develop a certain degree of autonomy in their learning.

Besides Benson's claim on the multidimensional entity of autonomy he further defines it as "*the capacity to take charge of, or responsibility for, one's own learning*" (Benson 2001:47). Moreover, he expands his definition of autonomy to be the capacity to take control of one's own learning, because simply taking control over learning may take a variety of forms in relation to different levels of learning process. Moreover, the entity of autonomy as an individual capacity is well determined by Benson.

The flexibility of autonomy among language learners makes it difficult to recognise what an autonomous language learner is; therefore, this leads us to think of it in terms of observable behaviours that can easily be recognised among EFL learners. Those behaviours differ from one learner to another and from one language learning context to another.

Holec, one of the first pioneers in the field to introduce the concept of autonomy in the field of education in 1981, defines autonomy as "*the ability to take charge of one's own learning, having all responsibility for all decisions concerning all aspects of this learning*" cited in Cole-French, and McFadden (2012). Holec's definition of learning autonomy is taken as a reference for major studies conducted on the concept of autonomy.

Little (1990) views autonomy as not being a "*single, easily described behaviour*" cited in Benson (2001:47). He further claims that autonomy is not limited to learning without the teacher. Little goes beyond what autonomy is to what autonomy is not as follows:

- *Autonomy is not limited to learning without the teacher*
- *In the classroom context, autonomy does not entail an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher*
- *Autonomy is not something that teachers can do to learners; that is, it is not another teaching method. Autonomy is not a steady state achieved by learners. Cited in Benson (2001:48).*

This definition of autonomy seems to be more acceptable and realisable in the classroom context. Besides, Benson (2001:) defends little's definition of autonomy declaring that:

This definition of what autonomy is not is probably more widely accepted within the field than any definition of what autonomy is! Its value lies, in part, in its emphasis on attributes of the learner, as opposed to the learning situation, and, in part, on its emphasis on the fact that autonomy is likely to be displayed Variably both from learner to learner and from context to context

Autonomy is, thus, not a teaching method to be implemented in the classroom rather than some capacities to develop among learners to be good language users. It is no more about the total exclusion of the teacher in the classroom or a complete reliance on the learner.

Holec and Little in their definition of autonomy agree on the nature of autonomy as an individual capacity and that the content of learning should be determined by the learners. The idea of giving much freedom to the learner for an autonomous language learning is confirmed by Macaro (2008) claiming that : *“Having a choice in their own language learning means the language learner or user taking control not only of the language being learnt, but also of the goal and purpose of that learning...”* cited in Benson (2012:36) .

Benson (2001:8) claims that *“Autonomy refers to the capacity to take charge of one’s own learning and it was seen as the learning in which the objectives, progress and evaluation of learning are determined by the learners themselves”*. This claim on learners autonomy makes the learner at the centre of the learning process , having an overall ability to control his learning, therefore an autonomous learner is aware of the what , when , and the how of his own learning .

Lamb, Vieira and Jimenez Raya (2007) define autonomy in language learning as *“a competence to develop as a self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in and beyond educational environments”*. The fact of being a self-determined learner denotes that the learner knows the purposes behind his learning of a foreign language. Moreover, being critically aware as an EFL learner denotes the active involvement of the learner and that he/she is consciously involved.

Benson (2012:36) in his turn claims that “ *In order for a learner to become ‘self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware ‘ Foreign language users ,however, it is important that learners become capable of using foreign languages as a means of self- expression’*”. The ultimate goal for an autonomous EFL learner is to be able to use English for expressing himself as much clearly as possible i.e. to communicate fluently.

For Macaro (2008) autonomy in language learning lies not on just producing the target language, English as a foreign language in this context, but rather in being a fluent EFL speaker or user as it is understood from the following quotation:

Having a choice in their own language learning means the language learner or user taking control not only of the language being learnt, but also of the goal and purpose of that learning... Autonomy resides in being able to say what you want to say rather than producing the language of other cited in (Benson ,2012: 36)

Moreover, the importance of autonomy in language learning resides in the ability to seize the opportunities to practice English language to get a good mastery of it i.e. reaching a fluency level.

Chené (1983) defines autonomy as being: “*....independence from all exterior regulations and constraints. Autonomy means that one can and does set one’s own rules, and can choose for oneself the norms one can choose’*”. Cited in (Candlin 1987:13).

Chené’s early view to autonomy is different from the one of Holec (1981) and that of Knowles (1975) in that he sees autonomy in its general perspective as total detachment from the surrounding of an individual. Moreover, he sees autonomy as the complete freedom in setting one’s own standards.

Autonomy, as the capacity to take responsibility of one’s own learning is not easily identified in terms of behaviours among EFL learners. Therefore, it is important to describe autonomy in terms of observable behaviours as

Benson (2001:47) claims; *“in order for such constructs such as autonomy to be researchable, it must be described in terms of observable behaviours “.* Moreover, he sees that the effectiveness of the educational programs and innovations aiming to foster autonomy depends on their understanding of those behavioural changes they aim to foster. Thus, Benson asserts that : *“As more educators became concerned with learner autonomy, the definition of it became multifaceted as teachers and researches alike sought ways to understand why some students functioned with greater autonomy than others”* (Benson 2001:47)

As language researchers keep investigating learning autonomy from all its perspectives, trying to get a good understanding of it as a multifaceted concept , new definitions of it may appear. This idea is strengthened by Cole-French and McFadden’s claim that the language researchers are concerned with learning autonomy the less chances to get one agreed definition of it i.e. the more language researchers go deep in its concept, the more its definition becomes multidimensional.

Moreover, FU Jing-Yu (2007:39) asserts that:*“The expanding literature on autonomy debates whether learner autonomy should be thought of as capacity or behaviour; whether it is characterized by learner responsibility or learner control”*. Basing on this claim, this researches autonomy in terms of behaviours performed by EFL learner in the oral class, which denotes his responsibility towards his learning.

However, it is necessary to identify the forms in which we recognise autonomy among EFL learners through investigating the overall criteria that make an autonomous language learner.

1.2.The origins of autonomy in the field of language teaching and learning

The concept of autonomy was developed systematically in the field of language teaching since 1970s, in the Council of Europe’s Modern Languages Project. The latter aimed at providing adults with the opportunities for lifelong learning of a foreign language. Henri Holec, a Prominent figure in language

teaching studies, was the first to introduce the concept of autonomy and its social component (Benson, 2001).

Autonomy has been highly valued by researchers in the field of foreign language education. Therefore many writings about learning autonomy appeared as (Riley,1985 ;Dickinson ,1987; Holec ,1988;Books and Grundy,1988; little, 1991; Dam,1995; Dickinson and Wenden, 1995; Benson and Voller,1997;Coterall and crabbe,1999;Scharle and Szabó,2000; Benson, 2001; Benson and Toogood,2002; Palfreyman and Smith,2003 and so on).

Recently, autonomy receives a great range of importance among ELT researchers seeking for more learner-centred classrooms as an alternative to the traditionally teacher-centred classrooms; where the teacher has a total authoritative role in the classroom. However autonomy in its origins was an antiauthoritarian idea in the field of language education. Thus, Allright (1988:35) asserts that: *“autonomy in the late 1980s was often associated with a radical restructuring of language pedagogy, a restructuring that involves the rejection of the traditional classroom and the introduction of wholly new ways of working ”*.

This is a clear call for new roles of both teachers and learners in the classroom. The latter is expected not to be teacher fronted rather than learner – centred classrooms in which the learner is no more a passive recipient but an active participant .i.e. autonomous, self-directed learner.

Nonetheless, a great commitment is attributed to learner autonomy which is seen by many as synonymous to self directed learning as Wenden and Rubin (1987: 8) that:

Although methodological trends in second language teaching and learning in the seventies have highlighted the central role of the learner, an explicit commitment to autonomous or self-directed learning is relatively new to the field of second language teaching and learning Therefore, it is to the literature on self-directed learning in adult education

that one must turn for an appreciation of its educational purposes

This leads us to consider autonomous learning the same as self-directed learning. Therefore, along this research we use the two concepts interchangeably.

Autonomy has a long history in the field of language learning. Benson (2001:7) asserts that “*autonomy has the history of approximately three decades*”. Thus the concept has been in circulation for more than thirty years. Benson (2001:7) asserts that “*the theory of autonomy in language learning is essentially concerned with the organisation of institutionalised learning*”. Therefore, autonomy is concerned more with the learning of a language in formal contexts as classrooms and institutions.

I.3. Characteristics of an autonomous learner

As language researchers in the field of autonomy keep searching on its definition, components and the different ways to foster it among EFL learners, the criteria that form an autonomous language learner differ as well. Many foreign language researchers interested on language learning autonomy seek to reveal what autonomy is and what it consists of, Benson comes to shed light on the following pertinent questions

- *Does autonomy in learning mean that learners should be unconditionally free to control their learning?*
- *Does autonomy in language learning imply that [EFL] learners should decide what they learn, or can autonomy legitimately be restricted to how, when and where to learn they learn? Cited in (Benson2012: 29).*

Benson’ questioning about autonomy and its implications represent the pertinent questions that any language researcher interested in learning autonomy rise. However, as there is no total agreement among them, this research sees autonomy in terms of specific criteria that the majority of language researchers

agree on. Therefore, this research sees Snodin's and Knowle's definition of autonomy as representative in what follows.

Their [learning autonomy researchers] specific area of study may differ, but there is a consensus on the fundamental principles of autonomy i.e., learners take charge of, and become responsible for, their learning; they learn how to make their own decisions on what and how to learn; they understand their needs, they reflect on their learning critically; they maximize the opportunities to practice English inside and outside the classroom Cited in(Snodin, 2013:2010)

Autonomous learning is considered as synonymous to self-directed learning by many educators as Benson (2006:1) in his claim that:“ *The terms 'independent learning' and 'self-directed learning' also refer to ways of learning by yourself. But these terms are very often used as synonyms for autonomy*”. For this reason, along this research the two terms are used interchangeably.

Knowles (1975) 'definition of self-directed learning marks a major stand for an autonomous language learner criteria as follows :

In its broadest meaning, self-directed learning describes a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating their learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning , choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies , and evaluating learning outcomes Cited in (Candlin ,1987: 11)

Knowles' definition can be taken as a reference of what an autonomous language learner is , in that , during an oral session , EFL learner can take the initiative in such an oral fluency activity , work in peers or within a group as in a role play activity which develops their oral fluency. Moreover, autonomous language learners know well the why-for of an oral activity i.e. the objective behind practicing any oral task as to develop their oral fluency. The latter is preceded by the learners' reflection on their needs as EFL learners.

An autonomous language learner is than, the one who takes initiatives in the classroom, knows what he needs English for so that he seizes the opportunities to practice the target language during the oral class time. Moreover, a self-directed learner sets his own objectives as an EFL learner; therefore he can help in designing some oral fluency activities that develop his fluency in the target language. Identifying one's own learning goals leads to a good choice of the materials to be implemented and the learning strategies to be used in an attempt to reach oral fluency level as an ultimate goal for an EFL learner.

For Scharle and Szabó (2000) autonomy and responsibility are interrelated and are not easy to distinguish in practice since both of them require an active involvement of the learner .For them a student interrupting the teacher's explanation to ask for more clarification or to add and or contradict a point or paying special attention when the lesson is about something that he is not good at, is responsible and autonomous claiming that:

In all these actions, learners behave responsibly as they are consciously making an effort to contribute to their learning. They are autonomous in the sense that they act independently of the teacher, not waiting to be told what to do cited in (Scharle and Szabó, 2000:4)

Scharle and Szabó see an autonomous learner as the one who acts independently from the teacher i.e. he takes an active part in his learning of English, in that he will not wait his teacher ordering him to do an oral activity, initiate a talk or decide on what to learn exactly. Moreover, Scharle and Szabó see that fostering language learners' autonomy requires a development of a sense of responsibility among EFL learners and encouraging them to take an active part in making decisions about their learning.

For Yoshiyuki Nakata (2011): "*Autonomy has to be assessed in a framework that embarrasses all its components*". Since there is no one definition of autonomy, its components may differ from one learning context to another and from one individual to another. Therefore in our context, we may see an autonomous learner as the one responsible for his learning progress. As Scharle and Szabó (2000) assert, autonomy and responsibility are apparently interrelated and both of them require an active involvement. Moreover Scharle and Szabó (2000:3) claim that:

We may not think of a responsible learner as role models or (teacher's pets), but as learners who accept the idea that their own efforts are crucial to progress in learning ... [English as a foreign Language], and behave accordingly. So when ...answering question in class, they are not aspiring to please the teacher, or to get a good mark. They are simply making an effort in order to learn something.

Besides this claim, we recognize that responsible learners are aware of the necessity of their involvement in learning and that spending energy as EFL learners is crucial.

Some Language researchers (Holec 1981, Allright1990,) defend the idea that autonomous learners reflect on their own learning and are willing to work in collaboration with others i.e. to cooperate with them (cited in Benson (2001)). Moreover, Schunk (2005) sees autonomous language learners reflecting on their learning and are willing to partner with faculty and peers in learning i.e. working collaboratively with the teacher or with their peers.

Furthermore, Wang Xu-sheng (2010) reports that for Omagio (1978) autonomous learners “*have an insight into their learning styles and strategies; take an active approach to the learning task at hand; willing to take risks, i.e., to communicate in the target language at all costs ; are good guessers and attend to form as well as to content*”. This claim affirms that autonomous learners are aware about their learning style, the use of learning strategies , seize the opportunities to speak regardless the results. Besides, autonomous learners are said to take into account to their fluency development.

Although learning autonomy means the reshaping of the view that the learner is responsible for his own learning, teachers do not abdicate their responsibilities in providing guidance and establishing benchmarks. In the language learning process and the contrary teachers become the primary agents on fostering the development of learner autonomy within the classroom context (Pekkanli Egel:2009).

1.4. Related terms to autonomy

There is a number of terms that are seen as synonymous to autonomy though they can be distinguished from it in various ways as self-access, self-instruction, self-study. For Benson (2001), these concepts refer to the various ways and degrees of learning by oneself; however, autonomy in its fundamental sense refers to the capabilities, attitudes or whatever the capacities to control one's own learning consist of. Even if that the concepts of independent learning and self-directed learning refer to ways of one's own learning by himself.

I.4.1. Autonomy: does it mean to learn alone?

Autonomous learning is mistakenly seen as learning in isolation, alone, independent from the teacher. Dickinson (1992) associates autonomy with learning alone and independence with an active responsibility for one's own learning. (cited (in Benson and Voller, 1997:2).

As views on language learning autonomy differ from one language researcher to another, Sheerin (1991), comes to claim that "independence is used sometimes as a synonym for autonomy" (Benson and Voller, 1997:2).

I.4.2. self -directed learning

Despite the fact that many language researchers view autonomy as synonymous to self-directed learning, it is worthy to mention that autonomy was seen by some researchers as the result of a self-directed learning as Benson (2001:8) claims that :

Autonomy, or the capacity to take charge of one's own learning , was seen as a natural product of the practice of Self-directed learning , or learning in which the objectives, progress and devaluation of learning are determined by the learners themselves. (Cited in Benson 2001:8).

In this claim, Benson defines self-directed learning as the one in which the learner is at the centre of the learning process, in that, he takes the responsibility of his own learning. Therefore, a self-directed EFL learner is said to set his own objectives behind

any activity being implemented in the classroom, as whether he aims to foster his fluency level via his engagement in an oral fluency activity during the oral class time

Benson (2001:49) in his claim on self-directed learning goes further claiming that: “*Autonomous learners should, in principal, have the freedom to determine their own goals and purposes if the learning is to be genuinely self-directed*”. The latter views autonomy as a product of self-directed learning in which the learner is free to determine his own objectives.

1.5. Some characteristics of a good language learner and autonomy

Language researchers agree on some characteristics of a good language learner. For Soars and Soars, (as it is cited in Hedge (2000:82)), a good language learner is said to be:

confident on his/her ability to learn, self-reliant, motivated and enthusiastic, aware of why he/she wants to learn, unafraid of making mistakes, unafraid of what he / she does not know, a good guesser, a good risk taker, a good guesser....., prepared to look for opportunities to come into contact with the language, further more they are willing to assume certain responsibility for their own learning

When comparing the overall characteristics of an autonomous language learner and those of a good language learner, the results show that there are a lot of common features between the two. Thus , the following criteria gather the shared features between the two ,as being confident , independent from the teacher (self- reliant) , set one’s own objectives and determining one’s own goals behind practicing during oral class time , taking initiatives without being afraid of a negative feedback, responsibility and seizing the opportunities to learn English via some kind of oral fluency activities .

1.5.1. Learning strategies and learner autonomy

Language researchers agree that autonomous learners use strategies that facilitate their learning and maximize the opportunities to practice English in the

classroom. Thus, Harmer (2001:335) asserts that: “*in order to counter the passivity that is an enemy of true learning, students need to develop their own learning strategies, so that as far as possible they become autonomous learners*”. Harmer, in his claim, views language learning autonomy as an end objective to be achieved and a means towards an end at the same time.

EFL researchers opted to find remedies to the passivity of learners which is said to be the reason why learners fail to be fluent in the target language practice. Thus, language researchers as Cohen (1998) and Oxford (1990) agree that learning strategies are means of facilitating learning foreign language. Cohen’s definition and understanding of learning strategies lie in what follow:

Those processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action to enhance the learning or use of a second or foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about that language cited in (Cohen,1998:4).

For Cohen, learning strategies require an active involvement from the part of the learner, since he consciously selects the strategies to be used as an EFL learner.

Oxford in her turn, views learning strategies as :“ *specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self directed, more transferable to new situations*” Oxford (1991:8). The latter affirms that learning strategies are used for the sake of facilitating EFL learning, through making it easier, fast, funny, flexible and self directed. Therefore, being autonomous or self-directed EFL learner requires the use of some language learning strategies.

The importance of learning strategies in EFL learning is undeniable. Thus, Oxford (1990:9) sets twelve features of learning strategies that ensure their worthiness for foreign language learning in general and for EFL autonomous learning in particular. For Oxford(1990) learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner that contribute to the achievement of

communicative competence, help learners become more self-directed, decrease the role of teacher in the classroom.

As a detail of what Oxford (1990) sees as features of learning strategies, some of them are extracted as suitable with the development of EFL autonomous oral fluency practice. The achievement of communicative competence is considered as the main goal of learning a foreign language. The latter encompasses the fluency of the EFL learner which is one among its constituents. Moreover, Oxford finds that an EFL learner using some kind of learning strategies become self directed and autonomous, in that he takes in charge his learning and become independent from the teacher. Furthermore, as learning strategies are problem-oriented, EFL learners get profit in developing their oral fluency autonomously.

Using any sort of learning strategies encourage EFL to speak during the oral class time and take the initiatives, through lessening their feel of fear via some affective strategies. Making the EFL learner involved in a fluency activity requires certain social learning strategies that help them practice their language as to ask questions, ask for clarification. Furthermore, compensation strategies help EFL learners overcome the problem of the lack of vocabulary or some linguistic knowledge which makes gaps and hesitations in their speech and therefore producing a non fluent speech. The use of learning strategies as EFL learners pave the way towards more autonomous learning, and therefore more opportunities to practice English are to be seized.

1.5.2. Motivation and language learning autonomy

The importance of motivation is undeniable for learning to take place. Motivation is crucial to learning English as a foreign language meanwhile; its role will not be accomplished unless the learner is self reliant, actively involved in the learning process.

For the sake of motivating learners, EFL teachers have to know about their learners' motivational beliefs. For Boekaers (2002:08) motivational beliefs refer to *“to the student's opinion of efficiency or effectiveness of learning and teaching methods”*. To insure that learning takes place, it is

worthy for EFL teachers to conduct a need analysis of their learners before taking any decision about the method to be used or the type of activities to be implemented in their classrooms.

Moreover, Monique Boakaers (2002:) addresses to EFL teachers claiming that *“Knowledge about your students’ motivational beliefs will allow you to plan learning activities that make good use of their favourable motivational beliefs and prompt them to reconsider unfavourable beliefs”*. Regarding this claim, EFL teachers at the University of Bejaia, who aim at developing their learners’ autonomous oral fluency, have, first to generate a needs analysis of their learners and then decide on the type of activities to implement.

Teachers’ understanding of their learners’ needs will pave the path toward developing their learners’ autonomous learning. Moreover, knowing the degree of their learners’ self-efficacy beliefs, teachers will be able to develop their EFL learners’ abilities accordingly. A self-efficacy belief, as Boakaers (2002:8) views it is *“opinions that students hold about their own ability in relation to specific domain”*.

As EFL language teachers aim to develop learners’ autonomous oral fluency, they have to get a clear understanding of how they perceive their abilities to be fluent in their use of English in the classroom. Second, teachers accordingly implement appropriate classroom activities that fit learners’ needs. In their attempt to develop EFL learners’ autonomous oral fluency, at the university of Bejaia, EFL teachers have to design appropriate oral fluency autonomous practices in which the learners practice the language effectively in real and authentic situation of communication.

1.5.3. Learners’ beliefs and autonomous learning

In a well known saying, it is said that: “we can lead a horse to water but we cannot make it drink”; this means that a learner will not learn anything unless he has a desire to learn. Therefore, it is up to the teacher to motivate him and change the learners’ attitudes towards learning a language and implement adequate strategies on learning. Learners’ beliefs may impact learning either

positively or negatively, thus, EFL teachers, at the University of Bejaia, should understand the motivational beliefs of their learner to insure that learning takes place.

Monique Boakaers asserts that *“Motivational beliefs act as a frame of reference that guides students’ thinking, feelings and actions in a subject area”* (2002:9). This may be taken as a basis for teacher willing to develop autonomy among their learners in their attempt to be fluent speakers. EFL learners’ motivational beliefs about oral fluency determine the strategies that EFL students think appropriate to do a specific task [oral fluency activity] (Boakaers,2002). Therefore, as autonomous learners are supposed to be motivated, and have a clear idea about what to learn, how, when and what are the appropriate strategies for use, motivational beliefs can be seen as a landmark to autonomous language learning in general, and to autonomous oral fluency in particular, as in our context.

It is worthy for EFL teachers to be aware of how learners’ beliefs may impact positively or negatively the learning process and how they should react and respond accordingly. Thus, Monique Boakaers points out that: *“It is noteworthy that a student’s beliefs about a domain may be dominantly favourable (optimistic) or unfavourable (pessimistic), thus providing a positive or negative context for learning”*(2002:09). This claim strengthens the idea that beliefs may have either a positive or negative impact on learning.

1.5.4. Self – Assessment and learning autonomy

EFL researchers keep investigating the ways to develop autonomy among learners, teachers have to push learners to assess their own learning as Boakaers (2002:11) points out, *“[EFL teachers] Gradually stimulate them [EFL learners] to reflect on their own performance (self-assessment)”*. Boakaers finds that students cannot employ self-assessment technique unless they recognize its value. Therefore, she sees that it is the role of the teacher to make his learners aware of the importance of self-assessment, and to see how much their oral fluency is developing after each oral fluency activity implemented in the classroom.

David Gardner (2000), in his turn conducted a research in which he showed the benefits of self assessment and how it is directly related to autonomy.

- Self-assessment is a tool which supports learners taking charge of their learning
- The same as Autonomous learners deciding on what to learn, when to learn and how to Learn; Self-assessors decide on what to assess, when to assess it and how to assess it .

Moreover, as self –assessment may be conducted in different language skills; autonomous learners may assess their progress and their oral performances regarding their learning goals i.e. to be fluent speaker. This is supported by Dickinson (1987) claiming that:’ *self-evaluation of performances is an important skill for all language learners but for autonomous language learners in particular*’. Cited in Gardner (2000:51). David Gardner in his claim defends the principle that autonomous learners self-evaluate their progress as a means to be proficient language users.

1.6. Stages of the development of EFL learners responsibilities in the classroom

Before making any contribution from the part of the teacher to develop a sense of responsibility among EFL learners, teachers have to change, first, their learners’ attitudes. Scharle and Szabó (2000) claim that developing a sense of responsibility in the EFL learners to get them understand why and how they learn and be willing to take an active role in their learning is not an easy task from the part of the teacher. Therefore, the two language researchers (2000:1) go further claiming that:“*the task is not an easy one, as training learners for responsibility involves changing their attitudes*”.

Scharle and Szabó in their book on learner autonomy, a guide to developing learner responsibility, organize a set of activities which represent the three phases of the development process. The three phases are about raising awareness, changing attitudes and transferring roles. The first phase, which is raising awareness, is about learners becoming aware of the importance of their contributions as EFL learners, thus Scharle and Szabó (2000:1) assert “*first, learners have to become aware of the difference their contribution can make,*

and of the nature of language learning in general". This awareness is crucial for the establishment of an SDL (Self Directed Learning) context where learning may, to some extent, be guaranteed. The three stages and their suitable practices, as set in (Scharle and Szabó 9), are summarised as follows:

- a. Raising awareness: In this starting phase, Teachers encourage their learners to think about their learning. In this stage learners are not yet responsible and need to be shown what to do; therefore; The activities designed in this stage are *"tightly structured and controlled by the teacher"*.
- b. Changing Attitudes: this stage requires a lot of practice as it takes time to move from *"understanding to practicing new roles and habits, especially when this involves breaking away from stubborn old behaviours"*. The activities designed at this stage are repeatable tending to allow the learner more opportunities to take initiative.
- c. Transferring roles: This phase requires *"a considerable change in classroom management"*. The activities designed in this phase are not strictly structured, giving more freedom for learners to accomplish the tasks and decide on them as well.

1.7. Some learning approaches and autonomy

1.7.1. Learner -centred approach and autonomy

The new trends in the field of language teaching and learning call for more learner-centred classrooms rather than teacher centred ones. This revolution in education gives more responsibilities for the learner and reduces the teacher dominance and monopoly. Xhaferi (2011) asserts, *"the main challenge that language teachers face is helping learners move toward becoming responsible for their own learning through using some techniques that promote learner autonomy"*. This claim strengthens the principle of making the learner in charge of his own learning .i.e. becoming autonomous to ensure that learning is taking place.

In addition to the previous claims, Little ((1994) as cited in Benson (2001 :)) asserts, *"a genuinely successful learning is at the end autonomous"*.

This is what makes EFL researchers seek for more autonomy on the part of EFL learners, through creating a sort of classroom activities that foster, on one hand their autonomy and on the other hand their oral fluency.

1.7.2. Competency-Based Approach

As the calls for autonomy keep growing, competency-based approach comes to put autonomy into practice. Thus autonomy is said to be the end goal of this learning approach where the skilfulness of learners is crucial. Among the first seeds of this approach in Algeria, the new reform of the educational system at the university level, in what is known as the LMD system which began in 2005. Thus, Idri's work on the new reform of the educational system at the university of Bejaia and its impact on EFL learners' autonomy; came to the conclusion that *"autonomy is hardly perceived in our learners (with the exception of a minority)"* cited in (Idri, 2012:2182). However, she views that the LMD system, as a feature of competency-based approach, did not fail to achieve autonomy.

Among the solutions suggested by the language researcher, Nadia Idri (2012:2182) *"Rising of autonomy through competence development"*. Accordingly, the development of oral competences among EFL learners will result on an autonomous use of the target language. This may lead us to think that a fluent use of English by EFL learners via the implementation of some fluency activities will make of them confident language users, and therefore autonomous language learners.

1.8. Teachers' roles in fostering learners' autonomy

The importance of autonomy in the field of foreign language learning is undeniable, as many EFL researchers attempt to show, it is important to develop it among foreign language learners as (Snodin, 2013, Gardner, 2011; Murphy, 2008; Hurd, 2005). Thus, Linda Murphy (2011: 24) asserts that: *"Despite the lack of a single, universal theory of autonomy, there is agreement on the educational importance of developing autonomy and that autonomy can take a variety of forms, depending on learning context and learner characteristics"*.

As EFL learning contexts differ from one area of study to another, teacher's attempts to develop EFL learners' autonomy differ accordingly. Moreover, learner's characteristics or what is known as individual differences between learners make teachers under the pressure of such heterogeneity of their learners' behaviours which do not allow them to follow a specific teaching method. Furthermore, it is difficult for EFL teachers, regarding the number of students per group, quality of material and time constraints to develop a certain Self-directed Learning (SDL) course; which meets all their learners' needs and expectations during an oral expression session.

Despite the endless attempts by foreign language researchers to provide EFL teachers with the appropriate teaching methods that minimize the efforts spent and ensure learning to take place. The targeted objective [autonomy] has not ,yet, been achieved. Thus, Scharle and Szabó (2000:1) claim that: *“Most language teachers have experienced the frustration of investing endless amounts of energy in their students and getting very little response”*. This claim represents a universal shared problem in most EFL oral classrooms. As a reaction to this passivity shown from the part of the learner, and the fruitless energy spent by EFL teachers to make learners speak or communicate in English; language researchers found that promoting learners autonomy in the classroom results in a good learning of language. However, Pekkanli Eggel (2009) in his turn asserts that:

Although learner autonomy means a reshaping of the view that the learner is responsible for learning, teachers do not abdicate their responsibilities of teaching in the language learning process and on the contrary teachers become the primary agents on fostering the development of learner autonomy within the classroom context (Pekkanli Eggel: 2009).

It is true that the role of the learner is expanded in the foreign language classroom, but the presence of the teacher is still worthy with a slight change of functions moving from the extreme dominance of the class to being a facilitator and a guide in the EFL classroom.

1.9. Learners and teachers 'roles and responsibilities in a learner centred classroom

In the field of ELT, the term 'role' refers to the functions both teachers and learners perform during the course of a lesson. Thus, Hedge (2000:26) "asserts that teachers and learners 'expectations about what are appropriate functions to perform in various learning tasks will determine the roles that each perform".

Karavas-Dukas (1995) has conducted a research with a multicultural group of experienced teachers from various contexts in the world, representing different teaching approaches. The following table summarizes the categories of the roles played by those teachers.

Teachers 'role	Percentages
Source of expertise	46.4%
Management roles	35.7%
Source of advice	53.5%
Facilitator of learning	64.2%
Sharing roles	17.8%
Creator Of classroom atmosphere	14.2%
Example of behaviour and hard work	3.5%
Evaluator	10.7%

Table n° 1: a summary of Karavas-Dukas study on the different roles performed by teachers the worldwide in 1995.

It is noticeable that the main roles played by teachers are that of source of advice, source of expertise, facilitator of learning and management roles. However, the precise interpretation of these roles depends on the social and cultural contexts where the teaching/ learning process occurs as Hedge (2000:29) claims it, *“as well as being partly dependent on personality or particular method, the precise interpretation of these functions would also be to some extent socially and culturally dependent”*.

1.9.1 .Constraints to develop learners ‘autonomy in the classroom

Even the recurrent call for the establishment of real learner-centred classrooms, where learners are responsible for their own learning and independent from the teacher, Teachers themselves may be an obstacle toward the development of this independence among their learners. Thus, Grundy (1999) claims that: *“the contemporary trust to develop learner independence is particularly hard on teacher’s self- confidence”* cited in (Griffiths and Parr, 2001:247). Grundy in his claim suggests that the development of learners’ autonomy is seen, to some extent, as a threat to the teacher’s status in the classroom i.e. teachers uncomfortable with their new roles in their classes; which require from them high skilfulness and flexibility in managing their classes even though some teachers are not trained enough or not sufficiently knowledgeable on what to be taught. Thus, untrained teachers acquainted with the traditional teaching methods, where the teacher is the authority will be as a “straitjacket’ in his class . Thus, the implementation of innovative oral fluency practices or even other types of activities is, without doubt, impossible and therefore learners will keep depending on the their teachers without any autonomous practice of the target language.

Conclusion

Developing autonomy among EFL learners is not only the matter of teachers in the classroom, rather than students themselves who have to be aware of how much their personal contributions is important for the success of their learning of English.

Section two: oral fluency practice

Introduction

The study of English as a foreign language has become a necessity all over the world. Therefore, EFL learners look for the native like mastery of English in terms of accuracy and fluency. Most of students think of fluency as the ultimate goal that allows them communicate their ideas in English easily and spontaneously.

2.1. What is fluency? And what makes a fluent EFL speaker?

There is no one definition of fluency because simply, it is made up of many aspects of language. As Derwing (2004) claims, *“the difficulty in achieving a definition lies in the fact that fluency encompasses many aspects of language”* (cited in Al-Sibai (2004:2)). The latter makes the answer to Thornbury’s questions difficult.

As the language researcher, Thornbury (2005:7) starts his writings on fluency through asking the following questions: *“what exactly is fluency? When we talk about someone as being fluent speaker? Is fluency simply the ability to speak fast?”* Only the last question that Thornbury directly answers claiming that: *“speed is a factor, but it is by no means the only-or even the most important-one”*. Speaking fast is one among other criteria of a fluent English speaker.

A fluent speaker for Hartmann and Stork (1976) is the one who can use the structures of a language [EFL] whilst focusing on content rather than form. Moreover, fluent speakers use the language patterns automatically at a normal speed. The latter is strengthened by Turk (1992) who sees speed as an indicator of fluency.

For Filmore (1979:93) fluency requires four abilities, the ability to talk at length, with few pauses, the ability to talk using coherent, reasoned, and semantically dense sentences, the two last abilities reside between the

appropriateness of language use in different contexts and the creativity and imagination in language use.

Thornbury (2005:6-7) in his turn, finds that pauses are the landmark of fluency in that *“research into listeners’ perceptions of a speakers’ fluency suggests that pausing is important”* and *“frequent pauses is a sure sign of struggling speaker”*. This leads to the conclusion that the less inappropriate pauses the speaker makes the more fluent he becomes.

Rossiter et al (2010: 584) in their turn claim *“The term ‘fluency has a range of meanings, the most common of which is related to high proficiency, that is, an excellent grasp of the vocabulary and grammar of a language”* cited in Al-Sibai (2004:2).The latter makes of fluency not only related to language pronunciation i.e. but also to the mastery of its grammar and vocabulary as well.

Although language researchers do not agree on one definition of oral fluency, there are great similarities between the definitions given. Al-Sibai ((2004:2) cited that Brunfit (1984)) defines fluency as *“a natural language use”*. Moreover she affirms this definition via Richard et al (1985) who claim that fluency is about *“the features which give speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including native like use of pausing, rhythm, Intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions”*.The two definitions consider the normality of speaking as an indicator of a fluent speaker.

Hedge (2000:54) points out that: *“the term ‘fluency’ relates to language production and it is normally reserved to speech”*. This claim associates fluency with the speaking skill rather than other language skills. Tricia Hedge further defines fluency as:” *the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation”* (2000:54). The latter strengthens the idea that a fluent speaker is able to make a natural use of the target language i.e. English.

2.2. Fluency activities

As language researchers keep inquiring on the kind of practice that leads to the development of communicative language ability, Brunfit (1984a) come to suggest the use of fluency activities for the sake of bringing learners towards a natural use of language i.e. English. Brunfit defends his concept fluency activities asserting that “*fluency activities develop a pattern of language interaction within the classroom which is as close as possible to that used by competent performers in the mother tongue in real life*” (cited in Hedge (2000:57)). The latter makes of fluency as an end goal in it, as it is developed via classroom oral fluency activities; moreover, fluency practice is said to make EFL learner use the language as naturally as possible in that Brunfit compares it to the natural use of the mother tongue.

Obviously, before implementing any type of oral activities in their oral classes, teachers ought first to diagnose their learner’s needs. Thus, Nadia Idri (2011b) points out that: “*teachers should adjust the content to the learners’ needs and abilities*” (Cited in (Idri, 2012: 2178)). Therefore, teachers have to precede their design of any type of oral activities by generating a needs analysis of their EFL learners.

2.2.2. Criteria for speaking tasks

Thornbury (2005) sets some conditions for speaking tasks so as to maximize EFL learners speaking opportunities and increase their chances to experience autonomous language use; therefore these speaking conditions are said to be: productivity, purposefulness, interactivity and challenge.

- a) Productivity: for Thornbury (2005:90): “*a speaking activity needs to be maximally language productive in order to provide the best conditions for autonomous language use*”. This productivity can be achieved when learners aim at achieving a common outcome, as to be fluent. Accordingly, speaking activities require breaking down the routines and pushing the learners’ creativity and productivity forwards via creating new leaning situations as problem solving activities that require an active involvement of the learner and therefore an autonomous use of language.

- b) Purposefulness: learners should have a clear understanding of the outcome to be achieved via any speaking activity as to develop their fluency, therefore, accordingly they may act autonomously to achieve the desired outcome
- c) Interactivity: the interactivity of speaking activities is important for a good preparation of a real-life English language use. Therefore, as Thornbury asserts: “...formal, monologic speaking tasks such as talks and presentations should be performed in situations where there is at least the possibility for interaction”. (ibid). Therefore, oral project presentations and free talk activities have to be performed where the possibilities of interaction is increased, in front of an audience which may ask questions, show interest ...etc.
- d) Challenge: providing learners with challenging tasks may push learners to experience a sense of excitement which is for Thornbury a part of autonomous language use.

Furthermore, the language researcher Ghout asserts that “*Communicative tasks do not only give the language learners the chance to negotiate meaning more effectively but also the possibility to take on an active role*” (Ghout,2012). Therefore, the language researcher in her claim strengthens the idea that the type of classroom activity has an impact on the learners ‘involvement in the learning process.

2.2.1. Criteria of fluency practice

As EFL learners attempt to reach fluency, Brunfit (1984a) among other researchers, have set some criteria that are necessary to help EFL learners achieve fluency such as:

- *Language should be a means to an end , the focus should be on meaning not on the form*
- *The content should be determined by the learner who is speaking i.e. the learner has to formulate and produce ideas, information, opinions, etc.*
- *There must be a negotiation of meaning between speakers, i.e. students must be involved in interpreting a meaning from what they hear and constructing what to say as response i.e. they should not be reliant on the teacher or the materials to provide the language* Cited in (Hedge 2000:)

Brunfit's criterion of an oral fluency practice sets the development of learners' effective use of the target language to convey its meanings as the ultimate goal to be achieved. Hence the focus is no more on the grammatical aspects of language on the meaning it conveys. These activities require an active involvement of the learner; who is said to be autonomous in his practice of the language, as he determines the topic of discussions by himself, negotiate meanings, take decisions through presenting their points of views, decide on what to implement in the activities, negotiate meaning with speakers which insures an autonomous practice of the language. Therefore, the effectiveness of oral fluency practices is determined by how much the learner is autonomous in his practices for a better achievement of fluency as an end goal.

Moreover, for Penny Ur (1991), an oral fluency activity has to push learners talk a lot (i.e. much time devoted for learners' talk), Participation is even (i.e. all the class members get the chance to speak), Motivation is high (i.e. eagerness to speak) and Language is of an acceptable level (i.e. the language used matches the learners' levels of comprehension).

2.3. Classroom activities that develop learners' autonomous oral fluency.

The effectiveness of any oral practice in the classroom depends on how much it realises its aim. Therefore, classroom oral practices may set as objective the development of learners 'oral proficiency, or the development of learners' autonomous language learning. Little (2007) (cited in (Dişlen, Gökçe, 2011:127)) points out, "*The development of learner autonomy and the growth of target language proficiency are mutually supporting and fully integrated with each other*". This claim pushes EFL teachers to think of appropriate oral practices that develop learners' autonomy in one side and their oral fluency in another.

As EFL language researchers attempt to develop learners autonomous use of English which leads EFL learners towards fluency; some activities are designed to meet their needs. Thus, Al-Sibai comes to assert that:

Many L2 [EFL] learners thus feel the need to speak fluently. Learners' reasons for wanting to become fluent speakers range from a mere desire to feel confident when talking to others in an L2 [EFL]
(Al-Saibai, 2004:4)

Al-Sibai in her claim views fluency as a need. She further comes to confirm the importance of autonomy for a fluent speech made by an EFL learner. This fluency is resulted from a confident use of the target language which is one among the criteria of an autonomous language learner. Furthermore, Al-Issa (2010) in his turn asserts that:

Now more than ever , EFL teachers strive to make their classes more communicatively dynamic by encouraging students to take initiative, think beyond the mandated textbook, and use language' creatively, purposefully, and interactively

Al-Issa in his claim sees that the only way to guarantee an effective use of the target language in the class is through encouraging students to take an active role in the classroom; and push them to take initiatives in the class and seek for an autonomous use of the target language.

Besides, Thanasoulas (2000) points out that: “*autonomous learners are experiential as well as experimenting learners who mould their own learning*” (cited in (Arican, 2011:167)). Thanasoulas in his claim, views an autonomous learner as the one who varies his learning experiences in the classroom, through experimenting different types of activities in the classroom. Hence, a set of classroom oral practices, which aims at providing learners with more opportunities to experience different learning experiences.

2.3. 1. Oral project presentations

No one can deny the importance of speaking in any language. For this reason, EFL researchers find students ‘oral presentations as effective activities to practice their English language. For Al-Issa (2010) oral presentations provide the learners to practice a meaningful English; facilitate students’ decision making

process which allow students to take initiatives and freely choose the topic to present. Moreover, Al-Issa views that student's oral presentations requires courage and confidence which is seen as an autonomous behaviour.

2.3. 2. Role play

Among the suggested oral fluency practices, Penny Ur (1991) sees that role plays are appropriate means to vary the kinds of learners' spoken interaction that the learner may experience in the classroom. She further defines role play activities as "*all sorts of activities where learners imagine themselves in a situation outside the classroom*". (131)

Furthermore, in role play activities: "*Participants are given a situation plus problem or task...; but they are also allotted individual roles*". (Ur,1991: 132). Ur in her claim, views role playing activities as opportunities for an autonomous practice of the language by the learner who is engaged in a problem solving activity or given a situation where to experience individual practices. Thus, role playing as it aims to develop learners' oral fluency requires certain degree of autonomy; from the part of the learner, for practice in the classroom.

2.3. 3. Free Discussions

EFL researchers interested in the development of learners speaking skill, as Ur (1991) claims, they set two types of oral fluency practices: task-based and topic-based practices. The latter, topic-based activities, are concerned with the subject of discussion, its main objective is the discussion process itself. Task-based activities, for Ur pushes learners to practice something as a free talk in the classroom and the discussion process in this case is a means to an end itself i.e. to develop learners fluency in the classroom.

2.4. Is Oral fluency, the ultimate goal of EFL learners?

Language researchers agree that most successful language learners are generally autonomous learners and master, to some extent, the target language. This mastery of the target language is viewed in terms of EFL learners' fluency achieved in their attempt to communicate their ideas as clearly as possible. Therefore Riggenback and Lazaraton (1991) claim: "*students of second/foreign language education programs are considered successful if they can communicate effectively in the language*" cited in (Jamshidnejad, 2010:9). The

aim, behind learning English in an academic setting is to be able to communicate with.

Among the ultimate goals of EFL language learners is to speak to speak fluently. Therefore, Richards and Renandya (2002) in Jamshidnejad (2010) assert that: “*Achieving proficiency in oral communication (i.e. speaking) is the main dream and the main motivation which a large percentage of learners bring to language classes*”. In EFL context, where English is practiced only in official settings being a fluent English speaker requires lot of efforts from the part of the learner. Thus, EFL learners have to be actively involved in the learning process as they determine their objectives and set their direction during oral sessions to well develop their oral fluency considerably. Hence, Benson (2012: 37) asserts that:

Autonomy in language learning implies learners setting their own directions for learning that will lead to divergent outcomes, because the ultimate importance of foreign language learning is not the acquisition of a shared body of knowledge, but the ability to say what one wants to say in more than one language

This claim defends the idea that autonomous EFL learners are supposed to be fluent in their speech, in that they maximize their opportunities to practice the target language. This is achieved when EFL learners determine their needs and their objectives to be reached; via taking an active role in any oral activity aiming to foster their fluency.

In addition to the previous claims, Arnold (2000) points out that:” *Learning and using language in a foreign context is strongly connected to the learner’s constructions of self*”. Cited in (Jamshidnejad, 2010:11).The learner constructs, then, his own conception of what a good language user is; and as EFL learner he builds his own idea on what a fluent English speaker is. Therefore, EFL learner will act according to these ideas on what a fluent speaker is and plan for his learning accordingly.

Furthermore, Jamshidnejad (2010:11) in her research comes to the conclusion that:“*being fluent in L2 [EFL] oral communication’ is one of the participants’ wishes and expectations, a factor in constructing their ideal-self*

as L2 [EFL] users". Jamshidnejad's view places effective oral communication i.e. as a factor leading to learners' recognition of their image as autonomous language users. This claim goes hand in hand with the EFL language researcher Idri, at the Algerian context, who sees autonomous use of language as the end goal of practicing the language not the rivers. However, learners may not practice the language if they do not recognise its value in terms of their own objectives, get actively engaged in the activity to insure that learning takes place and that fluency will be achieved .

Van Lier (1996:185) affirms that:" *poverty of expression in our learners may be due in part to the fact that they 'are not' encouraged to find sources of speaking, their own voice, within themselves, and with each other*". For Van Lier, the poverty of expression or the lack of fluency in the EFL learners' speech is resulted from the lack of opportunities provided by language teachers to the learners to practice the target language.

2.5. Teachers' Feedback and learners' autonomous oral fluency

Providing EFL learners with feedback on their language production plays an important role in the success of their learning. For Harmer (2001:137): "*feedback is crucial to the learning process*".

The efficiency of feedback depends on the way it is delivered by the teacher and the learner's readiness in getting profit as to remedy their areas of weakness and assess the degree of their progress. Harmer (2001:145) in his turn claims that:

The way in which we respond to students when they speak in a fluency activity will have a significant bearing not only on how they perform at the time but also on how they behave in fluency activities in the future".

This claim strengthens the importance of feedback delivery from the teacher who has to take into account the how and to whom this feedback is provided. Moreover, student's autonomy during a fluency activity can be

threatened by teacher's feedback which can block the learner's production of a language or even his willingness to carry on the activity.

What matters more when delivering feedback during or after fluency activity is to ensure that it will not get negative impacts on the learner as losing self-confidence and turning him passive rather than active language learner involved autonomously in the fluency activity in a safe learning atmosphere.

Moreover , Candy (1991:337) points out that the teacher and the learner can work towards autonomy by creating a friendly atmosphere characterized by *“low threat, unconditional positive regard, honest and open feedback, respect for the ideas and opinions of others, approval of self-improvement as a goal, collaboration rather than competition”*.

2.6. Some related autonomous behaviours and oral fluency

2.7.1. Self- monitoring and oral fluency

Self-monitoring as a prominent criterion of an autonomous language learner, may be manifested as a quick self- correction of the speaker. For Thornbury (2005:5), *“The quick self-correction of ... [EFL fluent speaker] is an instance of self-monitoring, a process that happens concurrently with the conceptualization, formulation, and articulation”*. As an autonomous language learner is said self-correct his language production; Thornbury's claim affirms that autonomy is required for a fluent speech production. He further strengthens this idea claiming that:

Self monitoring at the formulation stage may result in slowing down, or pause and the subsequent backtracking and re-phrasing of an utterance .Self monitoring of articulation results in the kind of corrections that even fluent speakers have to make when the wrong word pops or the pronunciation goes awry cited in (Thornbury,2005: 5)

Although self-monitoring, as an autonomous behaviour, may result in some pauses in the speech of the speaker, this does not entail a hindrance to fluency rather it makes the speech produced clear. Moreover, an autonomous

language learner is said to self-correct his speech articulation for a fluent speech production, with correct and appropriate pronunciation.

Speaking consists of four stages, conceptualization, formulation, articulation and self-monitoring. The Mastery of the above components by the learners ensures automated delivery of speech. Thornbury (2005:10) comes to assert that: “[EFL] speakers achieve fluency because these processes are to some extent, automated”. Therefore, as Self-monitoring along the stages of the learning process becomes automatic, it will not be an obstacle towards the production of a fluent speech.

2.7.2. Communication Strategies and Oral Fluency

With the growing interest of EFL researchers on learning strategies, learning autonomy becomes a major aim set by most of them. Thus, Rubin and Wenden (1987) assert, “one of the leading educational goals of the research on learning strategies is an autonomous language learner”(8) . The two language researchers recognise the importance of learning autonomy as a basis of any effective learning. Furthermore, they view the use of learning strategies as a must to help EFL become autonomous in their learning of English and insure a better use of it ,i.e., to be fluent user of the language.

In their attempt to understand how learning a language takes place, Language researchers classified the strategies used by foreign language learners into different categories. Communicative strategies, one among other types of learning strategies, are said to be used by EFL learners to facilitate their learning. Thus, communicative strategies are defined as “learners’ verbal and non-verbal means to resolve interactional problems, to negotiate meaning, to stay in the conversation and keep the channel of communication open” (Ghout,2012).

No one can speak all the time to himself, therefore, speaking is a matter of making exchanges of ideas between speakers and receivers . This can be made in different contexts which can have an impact on the degree of fluency made by the speakers. Therefore,

Thornbury (2005:25) points out that “ *the conditions in which speaking occurs play a crucial role in determining the degree of fluency that is achievable*”. These conditions mean the factors that make speaking either easy or difficult.

Communication strategies may take different forms in the classroom. Brown (2000) asserts that Dörnei (1995) classifies communication strategies into different categories as follows: Avoidance strategies and compensation strategies. The Avoidance strategies are of two kinds, message abandonment and topic avoidance. The two strategies are defined in (Brown 128) as follows:

1. *Message abandonment: leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties*
2. *Topic avoidance : avoiding topic areas or concepts that pose language difficulties*

For Dörnei compensation strategies may take different forms. Among the different forms of compensation strategies we may find the followings: circumlocution, approximation, nonlinguistic signals, code-switching, appeal for help, stalling or time-gaining strategies. These different strategies are defined by Brown (2000:128) as follows:

- a- *Circumlocution: Describing or exemplifying the target object of an action*
- b- *Approximation : Using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target lexical item as closely as possible*
- c- *Nonlinguistic signals: Mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation*
- d- *Code- switching: Using a L1 word with L1 pronunciation or a L3 word with L3 pronunciation while speaking in L2.*
- e- *Appeal for help: asking for aid from the interlocutor either directly (e.g., what do you call...) or indirectly (e.g., rising intonation, pause, eye contact)*
- f- *Stalling or time-gaining strategies: Using fillers or hesitation devices to fill pauses and to gain time to think (e.g., well, now, now let’s see, uh).*

2.7.2. The importance of oral fluency in EFL learning

No one can deny the importance of speaking in any foreign language. Therefore, Yani (2007) prioritizes speaking over the other language skills claiming that “... *most people, learning how to speak in a second language (L2) or [foreign language] is seen to be much more important than reading and writing*” .(cited in jamshidnejad (2010)). The importance of speaking resides not only in exchanging ideas between speakers rather than

making the speech produced situational and contextualized, and this is what writing and other language skills lack.

EFL learner's aim goes beyond just speaking the target language to mastering it and producing it fluently as much as possible. Therefore, Richards (2008: 2) claims that: "*Fluency became a goal for speaking courses*". This affirms that fluency is the end point to be reached in learning English as a foreign language.

Conclusion

Most EFL researchers, seeking for more learners 'chances for an effective use of the English language, may view the learners' contributions as an effective means to reach that goal. Therefore, it is important to rise learners' awareness not only on how to use the target language but how to be part of its usage as well.

Chapter II: Research Methodology, Findings and Interpretations of Findings

Section one: Research Methodology

Introduction

The present study attempts to show the importance of autonomy in increasing EFL learners' opportunities to practice the English language inside the classroom during oral class time. Therefore, this research is an attempt to reveal the importance of autonomous language learning and to highlight its impact on the development of EFL learner's fluency, through increasing their opportunities to practice the target language during the oral session.

1. Population and Sampling

This research is conducted with second year English students in Algeria at the University of Bejaia, department of English. The sample of study is chosen at random, since James D. Lester (2010:90) points out that: “ *to achieve meaningful results, you must survey a random sample*”. The research is conducted with two groups among the twelve present groups of second year EFL learners with the total number of 85 students. The majority of students are Algerians; therefore, Kabyle and Arabic are the two dominant native languages used by them. The two groups include, also, two foreign students; a girl from Botswana speaking Portuguese as her mother tongue. She hardly communicates in French. The second, however, is a Malian boy who speaks French as his first language.

As the research concerns only the oral expression sessions, we have chosen to attend with a teacher of oral expression, fortunately, in charge of the two groups of our sample. The reason behind choosing second year English students as a sample of our study is the fact that their level in English is supposed to be advanced and, thus, they seek for more improvement in the acquisition of more fluency.

2. Data Collection Procedure

As there are many data collection tools that can serve this research we have opted for the observation and a survey with a questionnaire. To identify whether our problematic exist or not, we have conducted a problem identification questionnaire with

second year EFL students at the University of Bejaia. Furthermore, we have generated an observation along six weeks, starting from Sunday, February 24th, 2013 until Thursday, April 18th, 2013 with the exclusion of the two weeks of spring holidays. We divided our observation phase into two parts, informal and formal. The formal observation is conducted through an observation grid, while the informal one is generated through note taking.

At the end of the observation phase, we have administered a questionnaire for the targeted students to fill in. All the questions set turn around the module of oral expression sessions.

3. Description of the Data Collection Tool

3.1. Problem Identification Questionnaire

3.1.1. The Aim of the Questionnaire

This research in its first stages is initiated by a problem identification questionnaire, which is delivered to second Year EFL students at the University of Bejaia. The questionnaire has the aim of identifying whether our research problem exists or not. Moreover, this questionnaire composed of no more than five questions, determines our way of inquiry for a better understanding of our two main variables autonomy and oral fluency practice.

3.1.2. Description of the Students ‘Problem Identification Questionnaire

This questionnaire addressed to second Year EFL students is composed of three main close questions and two sub-questions. All the questions asked turn around learners’ autonomous’ behaviours in an oral expression session. The first question is about whether second year EFL learners face difficulties to take part in the oral activities of their classes and the kind of difficulties faced. The second question searches for the frequency of students’ participation in an oral discussion. The last question is about learners’ asking for their help in solving their communicative problems.

3.2. The Student’s Questionnaire

3.2.1. The Aim of the Questionnaire

The present questionnaire tries to identify to what extent the students are autonomous and to what extent the oral expression teachers help in providing adequate activities to promote autonomous practices that help achieve fluency. So, it is a follow up to the results obtained from the observation phase. Moreover, it aims at showing the existence of some autonomous language learning behaviours which are not observable .

This can only be generated through a questionnaire. *“the most obvious way to discover the learners’ point of view is simply to ask them. One way to ‘ask learners’ is to use questionnaires”* (Taron and Yule, 1989: 134). The data collected via this questionnaire encompass the core components of the literature found on the theme and makes it specific to the Algerian context, more specifically to second year EFL learners at the University of Bejaia.

3.2.2. Description of the Students’ Questionnaire

As the sample study is limited to two groups of second year EFL learners at the University of Bejaia, the present questionnaire had been handed to about 85 students on Thursday, April 18th, 2013 at 11h15 for the first group in the classroom n° 4 bloc n°4 ;Then, at 13h00 we handed the rest of the questionnaire copies to the second group in the room n° 3 bloc n°4. From the 85 handed questionnaires, only 65 were filled in and given back. 56 were given back on the same day; however, the remaining nine copies were handed back on Sunday, April 21th, 2013 at 09h 40.

N° of copies	Number	Percentage
Handed	85	100%
Returned	65	76. 47%

Table n°2: The total answered questionnaires

The questionnaire consists of five sections that vary in their objectives. It includes both close and open ended questions. The former turns around yes or no questions, agreeing or not on some items, and frequencies of occurred behaviours. However, the latter, open ended questions, attempt to get learners’ own suggestions, opinions and comments as well. Moreover, it is important to note that not all the questions had been answered by students.

3.2.2.1. Section one: General behaviours of an autonomous language learner

This section is made up of seven questions (**Q1 to Q6**), gathering data on the overall behaviours of an autonomous language learner. We asked EFL learners these direct questions to see how autonomous they are and to know whether the learners are generating a certain degree of autonomy according to the criteria of an autonomous learner set by most language researchers.

3.2.2.2. Section two: EFL learners ‘awareness of their autonomous oral practice

This section consists of nine questions (Q7 to Q16), all of which concern EFL learners’ awareness in an oral expression class. The main goal of this section is to find out whether EFL learners at the University of Bejaia are aware of how much important their contributions are for the improvement of the use of English as a foreign language , during the oral class time. These questions vary from specific to general or vice versa, to provide us with a clear insight of the problem from the learners’ points of view when agreeing or disagreeing about any autonomous behaviour that should be manifested in the classroom.

3.2.2.3. Section three: Autonomy in practice in an oral class

The eight questions which build up this section from (Q17to Q25), have as an aim to show the existence of autonomous behaviours among EFL learners in their oral practices. Moreover, the frequencies given by EFL learners about how often they behave autonomously during oral class time practices. Furthermore, students are given the chance to explain more how they seize the opportunities made available to them to practice their English.

3.2.2.4. Section four: EFL learners past learning experiences .

This section is made up of four questions (Q26to Q29) which aim at showing whether EFL learners experienced autonomous learning and how do their past oral expression teachers managed to teach them.

3.2.2.5. Section five: EFL students ‘fluency level and preferred oral practice

This section is made up of four different questions (Q30 to Q33), about EFL learners’ preferences in terms of preferred activities and their personal evaluation of their speaking level. Therefore, all its constituent elements are gathered in one table so as to get a clear idea about how EFL learners, in our context, prefer to learn in an oral class to reach fluency and what they suggest to be practiced in their classes

3.3. Description of the observation

For more reliable data, a non participant observation takes place in two second year EFL classes. This observation is for Lester “*a field research that occurs outside the lab in*

-“*the field*” - i.e. [in an EFL classroom].” (91). Hence, the observation is conducted according to our sample’s oral expression session timing as it is shown in table 32. For the anonymity of our sample the real group numbers are changed to G1 and G2. The following table represents our research participants pacification of their oral expression sessions as follows:

Table n° 3 : Student Participants’ Oral expression session time table

Hours	8h00-09h35	09h40-11h00	11h05-12h50	12h55-14h20
Days				
Sunday	- group1. B -Building 4room11	-group2.A room12building4	-group1.A -room4 building4	-group2.B -room17building8
Thursday	- group 1 (whole group) - room11Building3		-group2(whole group) - room3building4	

From this time schedule, it is clear that each student spends three hours a week in an oral expression session, therefore; they have enough time to practice their English language in the classroom.

Our observation is conducted in six weeks, From Sunday, February24th, 2013 until April 18th, 2013. The observation phase takes an informal form in a total of four hours and half ;However, the rest of the observation time is conducted in a formal way, through an observation grid , from March 10th, 2013 to April 18th, 2013 (Total of nineteen hours and fifteen minutes without counting the three hours of the exam). The following table (Table n°4) , represents this research ‘observation time schedule as follows:

Table n°4: The Observation Schedule

First week	February 24 th , 2013	G2 . B	12h55-14h20	One hour and half	R 17 B8	22 students are present
Second Week	March 07 th , 2013	G1 G2	08h00-09h35 11h05-12h50	The total of three hours	R11B3 R3B4	The majority of students are present
Third week	March 10 th , 2013	G1.B G2.A G1.A G2.B	8h00-09h35 09h40-11h00 11h05-12h50 12h55-14h20	The total of six hours	R11B4 R12B4 R4B4 R17B8	Students of G2.B seem to be tired ,unwilling to study
	March 14, 2013	G1 G2	08h00-09h35 11h05-12h50	Three hours in total	R11B3 R3B4	G2: only 22 students are present.
Fourth week	March 17, 2013	G1.B G2.A	08h15-09h35 09h40-11h00	Two hours forty five minutes	R11B4 R12B4	G1.A: only 07 girls are present
	March 21 st , 2013	G1 G2	08h00-09h35 11h05-12h50	One hour and half	R11B3 R3B4	G1: absence of students
Fifth week	April 07 th , 2013	G1.B G2.A G1.A G2.B	8h00-09h35 09h40-11h00 11h05-12h50 12h55-14h20	Zero hour	R11B4 R12B4 R4B4 R17B8	Absence of the teacher
	April 11 th , 2013	G1 G2	08h00-09h35 11h05-12h50	Three hours in total	R11B3 R3B4	The majority of students are present
Sixt week	April 14 th , 2013	G1.B G2.A G1.A G2.B	8h00-09h35 09h40-11h00 11h05-12h50 12h55-14h20	Three hours	R11B4 RB4 R4B4 R17B8	-G1.B+ G2.A: absence of the teacher
	April 18 th , 2013	G1 G2	08h00-09h35 11h05-12h50	The total of three hours	R11B3 R3B4	Oral expression exam

3.1. The Informal Observation :

During this observation phase we keep taking notes on what is going on in the classroom, with focus on the type of activities implemented , the students behaviours and the teacher' position in the classroom. The two weeks of this observation phase are described as follows:

3.1.1. First week:

Table n°5: First week's informal observation

Weeks	Days	Groups	Time	Hours	Setting
First week	February 24 th , 2013	G2 . B	12h55-14h20	One hour and half	R 17 B8

The beginning of our observation starts on Sunday, February 24th, 2013 at 12h55, room 17 building 08. First, we introduced ourselves to the teacher as a Master II student conducting a research on an issue that concerns the oral expression sessions. The teacher, in his turn, welcomed us and gave us the permission to attend and suggest any type of activity to implement in the two classes he was in charge of. Our first encounter was with group 02.B as a kind of brainstorming; to get an overall idea on what goes around the classroom.. Of course, we managed to take some important notes that helped us get more engaged in our research later.

As a warm up, the teacher, asks the students about their working day and temper. Most of them replied that they were tired. This, in fact, explains the fact that they were neither interested nor motivated. After that, he asked his students, who had not yet presented their oral projects to start their presentations; however, no one does the work voluntarily except one student. Out of the four students who presented their project work orally seemed not to be confident enough on their knowledge and kept reading from their note books. This is what made them a reading project rather than an oral presentation project. In the meantime, the rest of the students seemed to be reluctant, uninterested and bored. The remaining student; however, presented her project with a great self-confidence and demonstrated quite good knowledge of the subject she dealt with. Her English was fluent and managed to raise her classmates interests.

In an informal discussion with the four students we understand that the topics worked out were not chosen by themselves and did not fit their interests. Therefore, they affirmed that the activities (projects) that do not respond to their needs and interests are likely to be frustrating *“we do not find any pleasure to present an oral*

project if it doesn't fit our interests and does not have any value for us"; A student said.

By the end of the 45 minutes devoted for the oral projects presentation, three students took the initiative and suggested a role play activity which took nearly ten minutes. The three students showed a great cooperation and enthusiasm in their presentation and simulation of roles. It was obvious how much they were motivated and how much efforts they devoted to the preparation. While performing, the three students

seemed to be confident, relying on themselves, used some communicative strategies to handle breakdowns in communication such as using gestures and paraphrasing. The three students (girls) speak English fluently and managed to recover the loss of some words by adding or creating new ideas. Thus, the majority of the students showed great interest and kept concentrated on the presentation. At the end of the students' performance (role play), the teacher intervened and asked the three girls from where they got inspired about it.

After the presentation, the teacher paved the way for open discussions which resulted on pushing 17 out of 22 students to take part, either by answering questions, agreeing or disagreeing on one's idea, taking the risk of gambling with answers and giving their opinions regardless the language used . This activity, in its turn, makes more than half of the students practice their English, without a fear of making mistakes.

3.1.2. Second week:

Table n°6: Second week's informal observation

Week	Day	Groups	Time	Hours	Setting
Second week	March 07 th ,2013	G1	08h00-09h35	The total of three hours	R11B3
		G2	11h05-12h50		R3B4

Group 1:

The majority of students are present. The teacher takes the initiative and asks his learners, first about their temper, than he asks them about what the 8 March signifies to them. Eleven out of thirty five students were engaged in this discussion, via answering their teachers' questions, giving their opinions, agreeing or disagreeing with their peers' points of views. The shared criteria of the eleven students are that they all gamble with answers, answer their teacher's questions voluntarily, they show a certain degree of confidence in their use of the language. The remaining students seem uninterested.

Group 2:

The majority of students are present. As a warm up, the teacher asks his students about their temper and then asks them about the 8 March and what signifies to them. This question opens the channel of discussion between all the class members except four to five students who remain indifferent. The majority of students give their opinions, argue, agree or disagree one with another creating a noisy, enthusiastic atmosphere in the classroom. It

is noticeable that the students gambling with answers sometimes and responding to their colleagues other times, they seem to be confident in their use of the language even the mistakes they make from time to time. The teacher presence does not impede the majority of students to speak. Thus, learners seem to be free in their usage of the language.

Conclusion: This informal observation is used as an entry to our formal observation. During these two weeks, our research participants become more familiarized with our presence in their oral classes. Moreover, this type of observation leads us to a better understanding of what to observe in terms of behaviours carried by our research participants.

Section two: Data Analysis and Results’ interpretation

1. Analysis of the students ‘ Problem Identification Questionnaire

Question 1: Do you face difficulties to take part in an oral activity? if yes , What kind of difficulties?

Table n°7: EFL students facing difficulties **Table n°8:** Sorts of learners’ difficulties

Total n° : 103	Number	%	Difficulties	Number	%
Yes	51	49.51%	Initiate a talk	32	54.23%
No	48	46,60%	Responding to teacher ’s question	08	13.56%
No answer	4	3.88%	Fear of negative feedback	19	32.20%

The results obtained show that half of the students’ answers (49.51%) turn around facing difficulties in taking part in an oral activity , while 46,60% of the respondents affirm that they do not face difficulties in getting engaged in the classroom oral practices. More than the half of our research participants (54.23%) find difficulties in initiating a talk in the classroom as they fear to get a negative feedback from their oral teacher.

Question 3: Do you participate in an oral discussion?

Table n°9: Frequency of students’ participation in the classroom

Total n°: 103	Number	%
Often	20	19.21%
Sometimes	66	64.07%
Rarely	16	15.53%
No answer	1	0.97%

The results show that only 19.21% of the informants often participate in the classroom .More than 64% of the informants from time to time participate in the oral discussions that takes place in the classroom while 15,53 % rarely get involved in. These results reveal that an important number of our informants do not put into practice an important autonomous behaviour which is participation and taking an active role in the classroom discussion.

Question 3: Do you ask for the teacher or the learner’s help to solve communicative problems? If yes, whom do you ask often?

Table n°10: Students asking for help to solve their communicative problem

Options	Number	%
yes	72	69.60%
No	25	24.27%
No answer	6	5.82%

Total n°: 59	Number	%
Teacher	42	53.164%
Students	32	40.50%
Both	5	6.2.32%

Table n°11: Students’ source of help

The results obtained in (table 10) show that more than 69% of our informants side in favour of asking for help to solve their communicative problems, while 24.27% of them do not appeal for help. as the majority (53.164%) of the informants tend to ask for their teacher’ s help to solve their communicative problems, this is what makes of them relying on their teachers rather than on themselves, thus , they lack certain degree of autonomy.

2. Analysis of the students’ questionnaire

Section one: General characteristics of an autonomous language learner

Question 01: Do you set objectives for your own learning?

Table 12: Frequency of students' setting their objectives

Frequency	Number	%
Often	24	36.92
Sometimes	36	55.38
Never	3	4.62
No answer	2	3.08

From the results obtained, 55.38% of students recognise that they sometimes set their own learning objectives while 4.61% do not. Thus, the majority of our informants developed an autonomous behaviour which is shared by most EFL autonomous learners as it is stated in our literature review that autonomous learning is the one in which the objectives are determined by the learners themselves. The results obtained then, show clearly that some autonomous behaviour occur among EFL learners at the University of Bejaia.

Question 02: Do you take initiatives .e.g. start a talk voluntarily?

Table 13: Frequency of students taking initiatives in the classroom

Frequency	Number	%
Often	21	32.31
Sometimes	35	53.84
Never	6	9.23
No answer	3	4.62
Total	65	100

The results obtained from this table (table 8) show that 53.84% of our informants (53.84%) sometimes take initiatives in their oral classes and 32.31% do it so often. However, the remaining 9.23 % of the questioned students state that they do not take initiatives.

Taking initiatives is among the characteristics of an autonomous learner; therefore, and according to the findings mentioned above, we may say that the majority of our informants develop one characteristic of autonomy in their attempt to practice the English language during an oral class time.

Question 03: Do you wait for the teacher to point at you to speak?

Table 14: Frequency of students' waiting for the teacher to point at them to speak

Frequency	Number	%
Often	10	15.38
Sometimes	34	52.31
Never	19	29.23
No answer	02	3.08
Total	65	100 %

The results obtained in (table 14) show that 29.23% of our informants declare that they feel free to speak in the classroom , give their opinions or answer the teacher's questions voluntarily without any kind of pressure on the part of the teacher, and this may be considered as part of students taking initiatives and seizing provided opportunities to practice their English. However, 15.38% of the respondents often wait for their teacher' orders to speak. Moreover, 52.31 % of our research participants affirm that they sometimes wait for the teacher's orders to make them practice their language, i.e. they are still dependent on the teacher and have not yet developed autonomy in learning.

Question 04: Do you take decisions on how to learn?

Table 15: Frequency of students' taking decisions on how they want to learn in the classroom

Frequency	Number	%
Often	28	43.08
Sometimes	28	43.08
Never	7	10.77
No answer	2	3.08
Total	65	100

From the analysis obtained only 7 out of the 56 questioned students say that they do not take decisions on how they want to be taught in the classroom. Therefore, as it is mentioned in our literature review, students' taking decisions on how to learn are said to be autonomous. It is clear, then, that the majority of our informants tend to be

autonomous learners except 10.77% of the informants who do not take such decisions about their learning.

Question 05: Do you take decisions on the appropriate time for practice?

Table 16: Frequency of students taking decisions on their learning timing in an oral class

Frequency	Number	%
Often	31	47.69
Sometimes	25	38.46
Never	9	13.85
No answer	0	0
Total	65	100

The question above aims at finding whether EFL learner at the university are given chances to decide on the time they prefer to learn in general and the time they want to practice a specific oral activity during their oral class time. The findings show that only 13.85% of our informants confirm that they do not have the opportunities to take such decisions. 47.69% of our respondents, however, say that during their oral classes they decide on the time to learn a specific oral activity. Taking decisions on such issues, is a criterion of autonomous language learning.

Question 06: Do you evaluate your own progress as an EFL learner?

Table 17: EFL students evaluating their learning progress

Frequency	Number	%
Often	21	32.31
Sometimes	34	52.31
Never	6	9.23
No answer	4	6.15
Total	65	100 %

From the results obtained, we notice that the majority of our informants conduct an evaluation of what they have learned during their oral class time as an attempt to be fluent English users. However, 9.23% of our informants claim that they do not evaluate their

own learning progress. The remaining 6.15% of the informants did not answer the question. They may not be aware of its importance or the way they should conduct such evaluation or they have not experienced such behaviour.

Section two: EFL learners ‘awareness of their autonomous oral practices

1=agree

2= disagree

3= neither agree nor disagree

Question 07: I should decide for the oral activities to work out by myself.

Table 18: Learners’ willingness for a self-choice of the oral activities

Options	Number	%
Agree	47	72.31
Disagree	13	20
Neither agree nor disagree	3	4.62
No answer	2	3.08
Total	65	100 %

It is clear from the results obtained that the majority of our informants are aware of how important their contribution in the classroom is. The (72.31%) of our informants agree that to ensure that learning takes place they have to be given the chance to choose the oral activities by themselves. Thus , as it is found in the observation, learners show enthusiasm and manage to produce fluent speech when they are given opportunity to choose their own topics.20% of students disagree with the idea of choosing the topics of their oral activities by themselves.4.62% of the informants, however, have no position. Therefore, providing EFL learners with opportunities to choose themselves the topics that meet their needs and interests will, to some extent, ensure active involvement and motivation of the learners and; therefore, ensure an autonomous language use.

Question 08: I should participate in designing the oral activities for practice

Table 19: Learners ‘willingness to participate in designing oral activities for practice

Options	Number	%
Agree	50	76.92
Disagree	6	9.23
Neither agree nor disagree	8	12.31
No answer	1	1.54
Total	65	100 %

The results obtained (in table 19) show that 76,92% of our informants agree that they have to take part in designing the oral activities to be engaged in; this is confirmed by Snodin (2013) who claims that autonomous learners take charge of their learning. Therefore designing an activity for practice is an autonomous learning behaviour which may lead to an autonomous language use and therefore, fluent language users. Only 12.31% of the questioned students seem not to be aware of the importance of taking an active role in the design of an oral activity to be practiced.

Question 09: I should be involved in selecting the teaching materials.

Table 20: Learners’ awareness about their ‘involvement in the selection of the teaching materials

Options	Number	%
Agree	32	49.23
Disagree	9	13.85
Neither agree nor disagree	23	35.38
No answer	1	1.5
Total	65	100 %

49.23% of our informants recognise the importance of their involvement in choosing some teaching materials in their oral classes; however, 35.38% of students show no position towards their choice of certain teaching materials. As, it is shown in tables (18

and 19) students are willing to choose not only the teaching materials but the activity itself, as well. The remaining (13.85%) of students disagree with the idea of choosing the teaching materials in their oral classes ,this is nearly the same with the 9.23% of students in table 14, who do not find any importance for their contribution on the design of an oral activity, and therefore, teaching materials as well.

Question 10: I should take the responsibility for my own learning

Table 21: EFL learners’ awareness about taking the responsibility of their own learning

Options	Number	%
Agree	49	75.38
Disagree	8	12.31
Neither agree nor disagree	7	10.77
No answer	1	1.54
Total	65	100 %

Regarding table 21, we notice that the majority of our informants (75.38%) are aware of the importance of being responsible of one’s own leaning; and, thus, how important to be autonomous in their learning since autonomy for Snodin (2013) is taking responsibilities of own learning. However, the 12.31% of the students do not recognise the value of being responsible in their oral classes.

Question 11: I should set objectives for any oral activity I am involved in

Table 22: Learners’ willingness to set their own objectives

Options	Number	%
Agree	45	69.23
Disagree	10	15.38
Neither agree nor disagree	8	12.31
No answer	2	3.08
Total	65	100 %

The results gathered in table 22 show that more than 69% of the informants are aware of the importance of setting one's own learning objectives.,15.38% of them; however, do not consider the importance of setting objectives for learning as it is shown in table 16 and therefore, they do not share this autonomous behaviour. The remaining 12.31% of students have not taken any position. As the majority of the informants set their own learning objectives in their oral classes we may say that they are , to some extent, autonomous as for Benson (2001) autonomous learning is about learning where objectives are determined by the learners themselves.

Question 12: I should take decisions on how I want to learn

Table 23: Learners 'attitudes towards their involvement in taking decisions about how they want to learn

Options	Number	%
Agree	55	84.62
Disagree	5	7.69
Neither agree nor disagree	4	6.15
No answer	1	1.54
Total	65	100 %

The majority of our informants (84.62%) show a great concern about their involvement in deciding how to be taught, during their oral class time, for the sake of achieving their learning objectives so as to be fluent English speakers. This high percentage is a clear evidence that taking decisions on the method to be used in the classroom is a major concern of EFL learners who wish to maximize their opportunities to gain fluency and be autonomous.

Question 13: I should take decisions on the “when” I want to learn

Table 24: Learners’ decisions on the time of their learning

Options	Number	%
Agree	41	63.08
Disagree	10	15.38
Neither agree nor disagree	12	18.46
No answer	2	3.08
Total	65	100 %

The results in table 19 show that more than a half of the informants are willing to be involved in taking decisions on the time of each oral activity to work out in particular. The 63.08% of the informants are, then, aware of the importance of their own contributions in their learning. However; 15.38% of the questioned students do not attribute any importance to decide on the time to learn and still abdicate this responsibility to their teachers. The remaining 18.46% of the informants neither agree nor disagree on taking decisions on the ‘when’ they want to learn. To conclude, we may say that the majority of our informants are autonomous because taking decisions on the ‘when’ to learn is seen as a criterion of an autonomous learner, Unfortunately, they do not find the opportunity to experience autonomy in their context where the teacher is the classroom decision maker.

Question 14: The teacher should behave as a guide in the classroom

Table 25: The teachers’ guiding role in an oral class

Options	Number	%
Agree	53	81.54
Disagree	7	10.77
Neither agree nor disagree	5	7.69
No answer	0	0
Total	65	100 %

The results obtained in table 25 show that the majority of students (81.54%) consider that the teacher should behave as a guide in oral classes.

(10.77%) of our informants deny this fact and consider that the teacher should cover everything in the classroom. The remaining (7.69%) i.e. 5 out of 65 students remained neutral. The fact that more than 81% of our informants prefer the teacher acting as a guide in an oral class; is an evidence towards autonomy. In his research on the different roles performed by EFL teachers worldwide Karavas-Dukas (1995) found out that 53.5% of teachers act as a source of advice for their learners i.e. a form of teachers' guiding role. Therefore, the learners chances for more autonomous practices in their oral classes as an attempt to achieve fluency is likely to be achieved when teachers keep guiding them and providing them with pieces of advice.

Question 15: I have to solve my communicative problems without the intervention of the teacher?

Table 26: Learners 'willingness to solve their oral communicative problems by their own

Options	Number	%
Agree	23	35.38
Disagree	31	47.69
Neither agree nor disagree	11	16.92
No answer	01	1.54
Total	65	100 %

The results show that more than 47% of the informants have no desire to be engaged to solve their communicative problems by their own. The denial of such important criteria (problem solving) in reaching autonomy is mainly due to the fact that most learners haven't been accustomed to such activities. However; the (35.38%) of our research participants seem to be aware of problem solving activities during oral class time as a means to improve their fluency level. 16.92% of questioned students remained neutral in their answers. Although the previous studies show to what extent the learners are autonomous, we may say that they still hold different views on the concept of problem solving which needs to be reconsidered.

Section three: Autonomy in practice during an oral expression session

Question 16: Do you initiate a talk during an oral session?

Table 27: Students' initiating a talk in the classroom

Frequency	Number	%
Always	23	35.38
Sometimes	31	47.69
Rarely	7	10.77
No answer	4	6.15
Total	65	100

The results obtained in (table 27) show that more than 47% of our informants sometimes initiate a talk in their oral class, and this depends on the type of the activity they are engaged in. However, 35.38% of students always initiate talks and seem to be active in their oral classes. The observation phase revealed that some students take initiatives, participate, seize opportunities and take part in oral discussion and engage in different role plays the whole sessions long.. However, 10.77% of the questioned students say that they rarely initiate a talk and therefore wait for the teacher to point at them to speak.

Question 17: Do you ask for clarification from your teacher?

Table 28: Frequency of students asking for teacher's clarification

Frequency	Number	%
Always	13	20.00
Sometimes	28	43.08
Rarely	24	36.92
No answer	0	0
Total	65	100

The results obtained show that 43.08% of our informants sometimes ask their oral teachers for more clarifications, and 36.92% of them rarely ask for clarification. The remaining 20% of the questioned students confirm that they always ask their teacher to clarify things. Thus; we may say that a great number of our informants use what Oxford calls a social strategy in the classroom. Therefore, as learners use some learning strategies they are, to some extent, autonomous learners.

Question 18: Do you prefer choosing the topic to be discussed by yourself?

Table 29: Frequency of students' self-choice of the topics of their discussions

Frequency	Number	%
Always	18	27.69
Sometimes	30	46.15
Rarely	11	16.92
No answer	6	9.23
Total	65	100

The results show that nearly half of our informants (46.15%) from sometimes prefer to choose the topics of their oral activities by themselves. While 27.69% of the questioned students find it important to be always involved in the choice of the topics to be discussed. Only 16.92% of the informants do not recognize the importance of a self-choice of topics. We may conclude that self-choice of topics by EFL learners in oral classes makes learning profitable. Moreover, it is proved through our observation that students

who have chosen the topics of their role plays, conversations and even free talk activities show a great enthusiasm and an autonomous use of the language.

Question 19: Do you decide on the type of oral activities to be implemented in your oral class?

Table 30: Frequency of students taking decisions on the type of oral activities

Frequency	Number	%
Always	7	10.77
Sometimes	19	29.23
Rarely	37	56.92
No answer	2	3.08
Total	65	100

The results obtained show that the majority of the questioned students (56.92%) rarely have the opportunity to decide on the type of oral activities to deal with in the classroom. However, 29.23% of them say that they do from time to time only. The remaining 10.77% shows that students always decide on the type of oral practices to be engaged in. However, it is observed that there is a kind of negotiation between our participants and their oral expression teacher about the oral activities to be implemented in the classroom.

Question 20: Do you reflect on your own learning?

Table 31: Students reflecting on their own learning

Frequency	Number	%
Always	4	6.15
Sometimes	29	44.62
Rarely	24	36.92
No answer	8	12.31
Total	65	100

The results obtained show that 44.62% of our informants reflect critically on their own learning from time to time. A very limited number (6.15%) claim to be reflective learners. 36.92% of the informants rarely or never do it. The results show that our informants (regarding 44.62 %) are, to some extent, autonomous learners. This fact is confirmed by Snodin (2013),“ *autonomous learners reflect critically on their learning*”.

Question 21: Do you assess your own progress mainly at the fluency level?

Table 32: Frequency of students assessing their own progress mainly at the fluency level

Frequency	Number	%
Always	15	23.08
Sometimes	40	61.54
Rarely	5	7.69
No answer	5	7.69
Total	65	100

The majority of our informants (61.54%) tend sometimes to assess their progress mainly at the fluency level. while 23.08% of them tend to do it regularly. The remaining 7.69% of the questioned students rarely assess their progress. When comparing the results obtained to Benson’s claim about autonomous learning “*the learning in which the progress and evaluation of learning are determined by the learners themselves*” (2001:8); we may say that our informants are, to some extent, autonomous and eager to seek more fluency .

Question 22: Do you identify your needs as an EFL learner?

Table 33: Frequency of students identifying their needs as EFL learners

frequency	Number	%
Always	22	33.85
Sometimes	32	49.23
Rarely	6	9.23
No answer	5	7.69
Total	65	100

The results obtained show that 33,85% of our informants always identify their needs to overcome their weaknesses as EFL learners, while 49.23% of the informants say that they do that from time to time. However, 9.23% of the questioned students affirm that they rarely identify their needs. Regarding Snodin's (2013) claims about autonomous learners and the above results, we can conclude that the majority of our informants are autonomous learners.

Question 23: Do you get profit from the opportunities provided to you to develop your oral fluency?

Table 34: Frequency of students seizing the opportunities to develop their oral fluency

frequency	Number	%
Always	25	38.46
Sometimes	18	21.54
Rarely	14	21.54
No answer	8	12.31
Total	65	100

The majority of our informants (38.46%) are in favour of always seizing opportunities to develop their oral fluency during oral class time as opposed to the 21.54% of the questioned students who manifest some reluctance in seizing the opportunities provided to them. 21,54% say that they do not get much profit.. Moreover; the results obtained are similar to the ones gathered during our observation where students speak just for the sake of speaking , while others get engaged in more than one role play during the same oral session.

Question 24: Would you please say how? i.e. how do you maximise your opportunities to practice English during your oral class time?

Among the 49 students who said that they opt to maximize their opportunities to practice English during their oral class time, only 15 students provided the way they do it. Most of these informants stand for talking all the time with the teacher and peers so as to discover their grammatical, spelling and pronunciation mistakes. Moreover, one student claims that:” *in the classroom, I always exploit the occasion of being in front of the teacher*

so as to ask him questions, or clarification of misunderstandings". Furthermore, another student says that: *"oral expression is the pertinent and suitable module to progress one's fluency i.e. when practicing the language we become aware of vocabulary and pronunciation and we become no more reliant on the teacher as the ultimate source of correctness, and will lower the dictionary usage"*. Regarding this claim, we may understand that this student is somehow aiming at achieving one's autonomy in speaking. Another student says that : *"personally, as an EFL learner, I still have difficulties ,but at the same time, I know the solution is to practice more with hard work"*. This claim is a clear call for more practice during oral class time. In addition to the previous claims, more than ten students seem to be risk takers, for instance ,one of them claims that: *"I always try to speak either in the classroom with the teacher or with my classmates even if I make mistakes, either the teacher or the classmates correct my mistakes"* This claim makes us understand that this learner is a risk taker and manifests an autonomous behaviour as he is not afraid of making mistakes.

Section four: Learners' past learning experiences

Please circle “○” the right answer: **Yes** or **No**

Question 25: Does your previous oral expression language teacher ask you to work in pairs or groups?

Table 35: Students' working cooperatively in an oral activity

Options	Number	%
Yes	59	90.77
No	4	6.15
No answer	2	3.08
Total	65	100

The results show that 90,77% of our informants experienced cooperative learning during their oral expression session. Only 6.15% of them claim that they have not experienced it. This means that the majority of EFL learners at the University of Bejaia have experienced cooperative learning which is considered

among the basic criteria of autonomous learners, as Holec and Allright stated that autonomous learners are willing to work in collaboration with others.

Question 26: Does your oral language teacher usually stand in front of the class while teaching?

Table 36: Teacher’s position in an oral classroom

Options	Number	%
Yes	44	67.69
No	18	27.69
No answer	3	4.62
Total	65	100

The results show that the majority of EFL students (67.69%) were taught in classes where their oral expression teacher is the authority and thus, there are less opportunities for learners to take part in decision making. However, 27.69% of our informants affirm that their oral expression class is not all the time teacher fronted, this is what make us think about the various possibilities that may be given to EFL learners to practice the target language in the classroom.

Question 27: Did your last oral expression teacher ask for your opinion about what to do during the oral session or how you would like to learn?

Table 37: EFL students’ giving their opinions in the classroom

Options	Number	%
Yes	54	83.08
No	9	13.85
No answer	2	3.08
Total	65	100

The results in the table above show that the majority of the questioned students (83.08%) were given the chance to give their opinions on what to be done in their oral classes. Accordingly, we may say that our informants had already experienced autonomous learning in their oral classes. However, 13.85% of the questioned students affirm that they were not given possibility to give their opinions on what to do in the classroom as it s

shown in question 26. Hence, we may say that the learners' past learning experiences may have an impact on the learners' actual use of language.

Section five: EFL learners' oral practice

Question 28: Does your past oral teacher provide opportunities for real English language practice?

Table 38: EFL teachers offer of opportunities for oral practices

Options	Number	%
Yes	48	73.85
No	15	23.08
No answer	2	3.08
Total	65	100

73.85% of our informants affirm that being offered opportunities for a real practice of the English language during their oral class time. While 23.08% of them say that their oral expression teachers do not provide them with the opportunities to practice their English in the classroom.

Question 29: How good are you in speaking?

Table 39: EFL students speaking level

Options	Number	%
Poor	9	13.85
Average	34	52.31
Good	15	23.08
No answer	7	10.77

We notice that more than a half of our informants tend to classify themselves in the medium level. 52.31% of them say that they have an average English speaking level. 13.85% of the informants evaluate their speaking level as poor while the remaining 23.08% of the informants evaluate their English as being good. 10.77% of the informants tend to not answer this question.

Question 30: What type of activities do you like to practice more in an oral session

Table 40: Learners preferred classroom oral activities

Type of oral activities	Number of students	%
Role plays	28	43.08
Conversations	36	55.38
Free talk activities	33	50.77
Oral project presentations	16	24.62

The results obtained in (table 40) show that only 24.62% of our informants prefer oral project activities, while the majority of the informants prefer to deal with conversations, role plays and free talk activities. Moreover, during the observation we noticed that students are actively involved in such activities showing a great enthusiasm to practice the language as they engage in more than one oral activity during the same session.

Question 31: Do they help you improve your oral fluency?

From the answers obtained, 45 students see these oral activities as important means to develop their oral fluency. Only 34 of them provide explanations on how these oral activity types help them acquire more fluency. Students find that being engaged in a conversation or a role play activity where the topics are chosen by themselves allow them practice more the English language and therefore they become fluent speakers. Other students find that the fact of being involved in a free talk activity or a conversation where they express freely their opinions, agreements and disagreements without the interference of the teacher make them feel secured and practice the language freely.

The minority who prefer project work activities argue that” *all the students speak at the same time and sometimes the topics are boring*”; others claim that the large number of students minimise their chances to speak as one student says” *we are 43 in the group , sometimes I do not have the chance to express myself . The time is a problem*”. Moreover, two other students claim that they are shy , finding difficulties to face students while speaking.

Question 32: Other suggestions

The majority of our informants side for the use of sketches , playing comedies and theatre as oral activities to develop their oral fluency. Furthermore, some of our informants find of the students’ self-choice of topics more interesting and provide adequate atmosphere for more fruitful learning and ensure a maximum practice of the target language

3. Observation Grids’ Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis of the observation grids aims at shedding light on some learners’ autonomous behaviours in their oral classes. Therefore, the results obtained in these observation grids may help in detecting whether EFL learners at the university of Bejaia are autonomous during their performances in different oral fluency practices

3.1.1. Oral Project Presentation’s Observation Grid n° (1)

Day: Thursday, March 10th, 2013 Hour: 8h00-09h35 Place: classroom11 building 4

Group: 1.B Number of students: 12 students Activity: Oral Project Presentation

Autonomous behaviours	EFL Students															
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16
1-Initiating a talk							X									
2-Interrupting teacher ‘s talk																
3 -Taking initiatives	X		X	X			X									
4-Asking for clarification		X			X			X								
5-Self-reliance	X		X				X									
6-Asking questions to the teacher																
7- Group Work																
8-Use of some communication strategies	X						X									
9-Answering questions voluntarily	X			X												
10-Motivated and enthusiastic	X						X									
11-Collaborating with the teacher																
12-Risk taking	X			X			X									

Table 41: Oral Project Presentation’s Observation Grid n° (1)

Our research participants (G1.b) are engaged in presenting different oral projects in their oral expression class. The aim of the activity is to develop learners' oral fluency, therefore; the first observation grid on this type of activity is filled in according to our research participants 'autonomous behaviours that occur ,at least one time, during the activity time span.

The results obtained show that only one (1) out of the 12 present students initiates a talk, as he asks for the teacher's permission to present his project. This student shows a great enthusiasm and motivation when presenting his project. A fluent speech produced with noticeable self-reliance, confidence, an active involvement in other students' presentations i.e. risk taking, taking initiatives, and asking for clarification. This student (S7) is autonomous in his practices of the language and may develop his oral abilities accordingly. Furthermore, the analysis of this observation grid shows that, along the presentation, no one interrupts teacher's talk; four out of eight actively involved students take initiatives in the classroom (S1,S3,S4,S7), either during the presentation of the oral projects or as an audience. Moreover, only three students out of the eight involved students asks for clarification from the presenter of the projects .Three out of eight students show a great self-reliance i.e. relying on themselves rather than their teacher or materials when presenting. There is no cooperation between the students in terms of working on groups. Some learners (S1, S7) use some communicative strategies to avoid speaking on some aspects of the project which seem to be challenging or using gestures for more explanation, thus they, for a moment , hesitate to speak and their speech was full of inappropriate pauses i.e. not fluent. Furthermore, among the eight students, only two presenters answer their peers' questions voluntarily. For risk taking, as an important autonomous behaviour, only three students seemed to be risk takers without a fear of any negative feedback from their teachers. Four students out of the twelve existed in the classroom seem not to take part in the classroom, not interested in what is going on.

This observation Grid shows that autonomous behaviours displayed by learners when presenting an oral project are not shared by most of them, and that less than the half of our research participant, in this sub-group, experienced autonomous practice of the language in its broad sense i.e. display the major

criteria of an autonomous learning. This leads us to reach point that our research participants lack a shared body of autonomous behaviours in their practice of the oral project presentations, thus, in this context this type of activity may not increase learners autonomous practice of the language to practice the language , since the learners are not totally engaged in this activity.

3.1.2. Oral Project Presentation’s Observation Grid n° (2)

Day: Thursday, March 10th, 2013 Hour: 09h40-11h00 Place: classroom12building 04

Group: G2.A Number of students: 13 students Activity: Oral Project Presentation

Autonomous behaviours	EFL Students															
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16
1-Initiating a talk	X			X	X											
2-Interrupting teacher ‘s talk			X													
3 -Taking initiatives	X				X											
4-Asking for clarification	X	X			X											
5-Self-reliance	X			X	X											
6-Asking questions to the teacher		X														
7- Group Work																
8-Use of communication strategies	X				X											
9-Answering questions voluntarily	X			X												
10-Motivated and enthusiastic	X				X											
11-Collaborating with the teacher																
12-Risk taking	X			X	X											

Table n°42: Oral Project Presentation’s Observation Grid n° (2)

The activity, designed for practice with our research participant belonging to the sub-group G2.A, aims at developing their oral fluency. However, the analysis of the results obtained in the second observation grid filled in, show that six out of thirteen present students take an active part in the classroom.

The results obtained show that , among the six involved students three of them initiate a talk i.e. they create the opportunities to practice the target language by themselves. During this activity time, it is rarely that students interrupt their teachers' talk to comment on or to ask him questions. Two out of the five students use some communication strategies. The first student(s1) uses a compensation strategy as he utilises some alternative words and phrases to compensate for the missed word. The student (s5) , in his turn, tends to use gestures, as a communication strategy to make the message clear. Moreover, it is noticeable that students do not cooperate neither with their teacher nor with peers. Three out of the five participants (i.e. more than half of our informants), take initiatives, ask for more clarification, are self-reliant and risk takers. These criteria show that these participants share a set of autonomous behaviours in their practice ; meanwhile the remaining eight students are passive , showing no interest on what is going on in the classroom. These results, than, indicate that the shared autonomous behaviours displayed by the minority of our research participants in their practices of the oral project presentations are purely individual and differ from one learner to another, this may be due to learners' differences, different learning experiences and other factors.

3.2.1. Analysis of Free Talk 'Activity Observation Grid n° (1)

The observation grid filled the time when our research participants were practicing free talks in their oral classes, shows that out of the 22 present students, only ten of them seem to be involved in the activity. From the beginning of the session, nearly all the students seem to be tired, unwilling to work; however; the teacher intervenes through asking some general questions just to make them involved. Only ten students tend to be motivated to speak and answer the teacher questions as for example

Teacher: *which country do you like more ?*.Student1 answer: *France*

Teacher: *why?* Students1: *because, in France people are open minded...*

Student 2: *me I like Algeria*

The moment when one student justifies his answers, other students come to comment on it and give their arguments. However, not all the students were engaged in this type of discussions, since nearly 12 of them keep quite or show a lack of interest about what is going on in the classroom.

Furthermore, the results reveal that 4 out of 10 involved students initiate talks, 5 students take initiatives, only one student asks for clarification, the time when 4 students

ask questions to their teacher and six students show a kind of cooperation with him. Moreover, six out of the ten involved students in the activity use some learning strategies to compensate for their lack of vocabulary and to keep the channel of communication open. These strategies vary from learners using gestures to communicate ideas, . These students show a great enthusiasm and motivation when interacting with each other, taking risks (six students) gambling with answers as it is shown in table 42.

Free talk ‘activity observation grid n°(1)

Day: Thursday, March 14, 2013 Hour: 11h05-12h50 Classroom 3 Building 4

Group: two (2) Numbers of students: 22 students Activities: free talk activities

Autonomous behaviours	EFL Students															
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16
1-Initiating a talk	X		X	X		X			X							
2-Interrupting teacher ‘s talk		X					X									
3 -Taking initiatives	X		X			X	X		X	X						
4-Asking for clarification						X										
5-Self-reliance (e.g not reading their notes)																
6-Asking questions to the teacher			X	X	X				X							
7-Working in group			X			X			X							
8-the use of communication strategies	X		X			X	X		X	X						
9-Answering questions voluntarily	X		X			X	X	X	X	X						
10-Motivated and enthusiastic	X		X			X	X		X	X						
11-Collaborating with the teacher			X	X			X	X	X	X						
12-Risk taking	X		X			X	X		X	X						

Table n°43: Free talk ‘activity observation grid n°(1)

What is noticeable is that along this activity practice, being self-reliant when speaking is difficult to be observed since learners are not prepared to speak and the activity does not require the use of any classroom material to be used.

The observation grid results show that our research informants display a shared body of autonomous behaviours in their practice of the target language.

The table 43 above shows how students are behaving in some free oral activities. The first activity was in the form of a “Radio Show” entitled “the origins of names”. This activity was presented by a girl who receives people’s calls telling her their names and do they mean. The eight first students (s1-s8) represent the students taking part in this activity.

As the majority of participants in this activity have taken part voluntarily without any pre-selection from the presenter of the show, they are motivated and enthusiastic, self-reliant and risk takers as they voluntarily initiate talks and take parts in the oral activity, therefore; they showed high degree of cooperation one to another.

The second activity is presented by students’ (s9), who asked for teacher’s permission to present something about “American idioms”. As the student presents each idiomatic expression, both the teacher and the students guess the answers, this way most of class members gamble with answers, taking the risk to give their propositions, discuss with each other in a great enthusiastic atmosphere. The rest of the participants (s10-s16) take part in the activity, cooperate with their teacher asking for his help to find the right answer, the time when others take the risk and give their answers.

3.2.2. Analysis of Free talk activity’s observation grid (2)

The results obtained in this observation grid shows that the majority of our research participants are actively involved in the classroom’ free talk activities. 11 out of the 16 students under observation take the initiatives for their oral practice and initiate talks in this oral practice. The majority of students take part in the oral discussions voluntarily showing a great motivation and enthusiasm in their speech; which is fluent for most of them. Ten students out of the whole participants seem to be highly confident, unhesitant when producing the language with few pauses; this is what makes of their speech fluent. Along this activity, students maintain a great cooperation one to another, asking for their teachers’ help i.e. to provide them with the appropriate words for use. Moreover, the majority of our research participants are risk takers, dealing with new challenging topics, giving their opinions regardless their teacher’s or colleagues’ feedback. Our informants use some communication strategies to cover their lack of vocabulary, to appeal for help or to not breakdown the channel of communication.

Along this activity students negotiate meaning and ask for clarifications (6 students out of 16) either from their teacher or their colleagues, generate

exchanges as they agree and/or disagree one another , asking and answering each other questions (11 students). What is noticeable is that our research participants act freely in the classroom without showing signs of anxiety or fear of negative evaluation from their teacher; thus, their speech was spontaneous and fluent for most of them (12 out of 16).

If learners’ self reliance in an oral project presentation is about learners’ getting rid of their notes in their presentations using their own communication strategies to cover their loss of words or ideas; in a free talk activity, self-reliance is no more about that. In a free talk activity, self-reliance covers all the aspects that make an autonomous learner; therefore, we opted to not put any mark on it to not mention the same behaviours twice as follows:

Free talk activity’s observation grid (2)

Day: Thursday, March 14, 2013 Hour: 08h00-09h35 classroom 11 Building 3

Group: one (1) Number of students: 32 students Activities: Free talk activities

Autonomous behaviours	EFL Students															
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16
1-Initiating a talk	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X				
2-Interrupting teacher ‘s talk										X		X				
3 -Taking initiatives	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	
4-Asking for clarification			X	X			X				X		X			X
5-Self-reliance																
6-Asking questions to the teacher	X	X								X	X	X	X	X	X	
7- Group Work		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X			X
8-Use of some communication strategies	X		X	X								X				
9-Answering questions voluntarily	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X		
10-Motivated and enthusiastic	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X		
11-Collaborating with the teacher		X								X	X		X	X	X	
12-Risk taking	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			

Table n°44: Free talk ‘activity observation grid n°(2)

3.3.2. Analysis of Role playing classroom Observation Grid (01)

Day: Sunday, March 17th, 2013 Hour: 08h15-09h35 Classroom Number 15 Building 3

Group: One (1.B) Number of students: 7 students Activities: Role plays

Autonomous behaviours	EFL Students															
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16
1-Initiating a talk	X		X	X												
2-Interrupting teacher 's talk																
3 -Taking initiatives	X		X	X		X	X									
4-Asking for clarification																
5-Self-reliance	X		X	X		X										
6-Asking questions to the teacher																
7- Group Work	X	X	X	X	X	X	X									
8-Use of some communication strategies	X		X													
9-Answering questions voluntarily																
10-Motivated and enthusiastic	X		X	X		X										
11-Collaborating with the teacher																
12-Risk taking	X		X	X		X										

Table n°45: Role playing classroom Observation Grid (1)

Throughout the analysis of the above table, we may see that the majority of students have taken part in this oral session, 3 out 7 students initiate talks , take initiatives in the classroom(the three students+ two other students). More than half of our research participants, (4 out 7) seems to be risk takers as they do not wait for the teacher to point at them to speak, perform independently either from the teacher or from the use of their notes. As the teacher asks his learners to improvise in front of their peers, three students seem to be very reluctant to do it. One out of two students use a message abandonment strategy, letting his speech unfinished so as to cover his loss of the idea; meanwhile the other student uses gestures and an approximation strategy to transmit his idea. Moreover, as each

role play is made up of two to three students, and with the great number of absentees, four students acted in more than one time in different role plays voluntarily as they take the initiatives to do it voluntarily, showing a great enthusiasm, natural use of language, high cooperation and fluent use of the language, except two of them who from now and then rely on their handouts to carry on the play. It is noticeable that the majority of our informants showing a certain degree of autonomy in their English seem to be fluent.

3.3.2. Analysis of Role playing classroom Observation Grid (02)

Day: Thursday, April 11th, 2013 Hour: 08h00-09h35 Classroom 11 Building 3
 Group: one (1) Number of students: 38 students Activities: Role play

Autonomous behaviours	EFL Students															
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16
1-Initiating a talk	X	X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X		
2-Interrupting teacher 's talk																
3 -Taking initiatives	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4-Asking for clarification																
5-Self-reliance	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
6-Asking questions to the teacher																
7- Group Work	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8-Use of some communication strategies	X	X				X				X		X	X			
9-Answering questions voluntarily																
10-Motivated and enthusiastic	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
11-Collaborating with the teacher																
12-Risk taking	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X

Table n°47: Role Playing Classroom Observation Grid (02)

Along this observation grid, it is clear that the majority of our informants are actively involved in the different role playing activities implemented in their

oral classroom. The majority of the research participants are highly motivated and enthusiastic (all the 16 students under the observation), showing a high cooperation one another. The moment when 15 out the 16 students take initiatives, eleven students among them initiate talks. Furthermore, we observed that the language produced by the eleven students who initiate talks seem to be fluent, with few pauses and lack of hesitations. These two autonomous behaviours displayed by learners may be resulted from their self choice of the topics of discussion which fits their interests and also the timing of the activity which fits, in its turn, the physical readiness of the learner i.e. at the early morning where learners are full of energy. Moreover, as the majority of our research participants seem to be self-reliant, i.e. they get rid of their prepared notes. It is noticeable that our research participants use some learning strategies to avoid gaps and silence during their performances as one student made a code-switching from English to Kabyle to explain a word, another student uses gestures that make the audience laugh, but this is in fact a strategy that she used to cover her loss of the appropriate word. It is noticeable that two students use an avoidance strategy, a communication means as they let the passage unfinished.

As the majority of our informants (13 out 16) are risk takers, seizing opportunities to practice the language as much as possible, we observed that five students take part in different role playing activities voluntarily. Therefore, in an informal discussion with the five students, they affirm that *“role playing makes them free to practice the language independently and develops their oral proficiency level”*.

The results show that role play activities fosters EFL learners autonomous use of the language, as it creates an appropriate classroom atmosphere for learners to develop their oral fluency. However, role play may be concerned more not only with developing learners' autonomous use of the language in the classroom, but with learners' autonomous practice outside the classroom as well.

4. Major findings

As this research is concerned with EFL learners' autonomy and how it impacts their oral fluency via their engagement in some oral fluency activities, we found that the majority of students, who share some common autonomous criteria of an autonomous learner get

engaged voluntarily, most of the time, in their oral practices during their oral expression session.

The analysis of the students' questionnaire and the observation grids reveal the importance of EFL learners' autonomy on their oral fluency through their involvement on some oral fluency activities. Furthermore, the observation shows significant differences on the learners' autonomous use of language from one oral fluency activity to another.

Throughout our continuous observation, we noticed a change in learners' use of English language in the classroom, when they recognise the value of the activities they are engaged in, they opt to speak more, through taking part in all what is going on in the classroom, especially free talk activities and role plays.

From the analysis of the students' questionnaire, we find that the majority of students side in favour of free talk activities and role plays. This insight is strengthened via the observation grids where we noticed an active involvement from the part of the students eagerly engaged with topics chosen by themselves.

Through the comparison of the results obtained from both the observation Grids and the students' questionnaire, we find there is a great difference about what EFL learners think about their learning and what exists in reality. Thus the majority of the research informants side in favour of designing the oral activities for practice (76.92%), showing a willingness for a self choice of the activities (72.31%), taking the responsibility of their learning (75.38%), taking decisions on the method they want to learn with in the classroom (84.62%), deciding on the appropriate timing of their learning (63.08%) and setting their objectives (69.23%). However, in reality only 36.92% of students often set their objectives, 43.08% often take decisions on the method they want to learn with, 47.69% decide on the timing of their learning and only 32.31% take initiatives in the oral class.

The analysis of the observation grids reveal that EFL learners 'autonomous practices of the language vary from one type of activity to another and from one student to another. Thus, we may find a student acting autonomously in the activities implemented regardless the type of the practice; meanwhile, other students ' autonomous practices differ from one type of practice to another .Hence, we find that the type of tasks

performed on the classroom either it is a role play, free talk activity or oral project presentation has an impact on learners' engagement in the classroom and therefore, the quality of their performances in each task.

Furthermore, through the analysis of the students' questionnaire, and the observation grids, we find that when learners find the value of practicing an activity i.e. learners set their own objectives, in one side and get themselves involved in the choice of the topics to be discussed, they seize more opportunities to practice English language so as to be fluent. Therefore, engaging learners in the choice of the topics or even the activities to be implemented make them highly motivated to practice and develop simultaneously their oral fluency.

Along this research, and through the observation conducted and the students answers to our questions, we find that students who seem to be autonomous i.e. confident, taking initiatives, risk takers, unhesitant to speak, cooperating with others, seizing opportunities, and using some communication strategies to keep the channel of communication show a high fluency level in their speech production.

Autonomy is not only concerned with what happens in the classroom, it is also concerned with what is outside, as the social and cultural background of the learner. Because, simply an Algerian student who may recognise the value of individual learning is not the same as a Japanese student who may find himself more comfortable with cooperative learning.

Furthermore, we find that the large number of students in one classroom make the task of providing each one of them with sufficient opportunities to speak impossible. Hence, developing learners' oral fluency requires lot of practice which will not be assured for all the members of the classroom except the autonomous ones who impose themselves in the classroom.

Despite the fact that the opportunities to practice the English language outside the classroom is, somehow impossible; autonomous learners may create themselves these opportunities to practice the language in front of their teacher who is supposed to provide them with the necessary psychological support with his awareness of his feedback delivery which may sometimes hinder learners' autonomous use of the language when correcting their mistakes.

Besides, in an attempt to find the extent to which learners' autonomy impacts their oral fluency practice, we may say that as the more EFL learners' are autonomous in their learning the more they seize opportunities to practice and develop consequently their oral fluency

5. Constraints and limitations of the study

There is no perfect research which is made up without constraints, the same as this research which has faced a plenty of difficulties. First, the insufficient time devoted to this study makes us under pressure of either limiting the scope of the research or trying to make it as clear as possible or getting more details on the theme with the risk of not completing the work.

Second, it was difficult to use the observation as a data collection tool in our context because of the non-observable aspects of learning autonomy and the large class size which limits our scope of the observation only on sixteen students.

It is true that plenty of research is found on both autonomy and oral fluency, but little research investigates the relationship between the two variables. Therefore, the lack of clear documentation holding the two variables are lacking and the multidimensional entity of each variable makes this research difficult for us as what elements to include and what to exclude.

We tried to make recordings in the classroom, meanwhile the noisy classroom makes it difficult to be administered; therefore as the data collected from it is, to some extent, unclear we decide to not include it in the research.

Limited time of the observation which is done on six weeks, altogether with the absentees and the confusion between schedules limits our opportunities to attend more in classes. Moreover, the lack of prior knowledge on how to conduct an observation, the early beginnings of this research, makes it difficult to take notes on all the autonomous behaviours that occur at the same time, this was a reason among others that leads us to conduct an informal observation for two weeks.

6. Recommendations

Developing EFL learners' oral fluency in the classroom in our context requires a change of the learning circumstances where learning takes place. Thus, an oral expression session, aiming at developing learners' oral fluency, has to be generated in a classroom with small number of students to be able to follow them individually and insure that all of them have equal chances to practice the target language.

We recommend that if EFL learners, at the Algerian context, share the same perceptions with their oral expression teachers about the purposes of an oral activity in the classroom, they are likely to practice more the language and develop their oral fluency accordingly.

Furthermore, it is recommended that EFL teachers conduct a needs analysis about how their learners want to learn, what are their learning preferences; and generate a meeting session where both students and their oral expression teacher exchange views so as to agree on one objective to be reached at the end of the year ,e.g., to be fluent speakers by the end of the year.

It is recommended that EFL learners will be trained on how to be autonomous in their practices of the target language; and instruct them on how to use some communication strategies in their learning so as to produce a fluent speech.

Besides, strategy training is important to boost our learners' autonomy and insure that learning takes place. Thus, the educational institutions in Algeria have to set trainings for EFL teachers on how to put learning strategies, as a means towards autonomy, into practise by EFL students.

7. Suggestions for further Research

Along this research our research participants were under the observation for six weeks, as an attempt to capture the overall autonomous learners' behaviours during their oral fluency practices. Therefore, we suggest that conducting such a research on EFL learners' autonomy requires a division of the population into two groups: control group (GA) and experimental group (GB).

The control group will be taught in usual way (as they are used to), However, the experimental group will be trained on how to be autonomous in their oral expression sessions i.e. sharing some autonomous behaviours. The participant teacher, in his turn, will use some techniques or design some activities with the aim of instructing students on how to be autonomous in their practice of English. When students will be familiar with these techniques, a classroom observation sheet containing those autonomous behaviours will be used with the two groups A and B .The comparison of the results obtained will show whether there is any improvement at the level of those autonomous behaviours or not.

Strategy training is to be suggested for a better implementation of an autonomous classroom learning atmosphere, where learners are given instruction on how to use some learning strategies by their own to facilitate their learning.

We suggest that future research investigates the effect of EFL learners' beliefs about autonomy on the quality of their oral practices in the classroom and how it may increase their opportunities to develop their English proficiency.

It is important to shed light on how important is autonomy for all language skills, speaking, writing, listening and reading. Thus, we suggest that future research will investigate the effect of autonomous practices in the classroom on the development of all language skills.

The last suggestion is that future inquiries on how to foster EFL learners' autonomy in the classroom are likely to search for how learners oral proficiency will develop learners 'autonomy in the Algerian context.

General conclusion

This research conducted with second year B.A. students of English at the University of Bejaia during the oral expression session explored the impact of learners' autonomy on their oral fluency practice. The work aims at showing whether autonomous learners may gain wider access to speaking practice.

Results of the study show that the majority of students hold autonomous characteristics, and accordingly are more likely to engage in oral activities, whereas the opposite is true. It is also found that students through the questionnaire display characteristics of autonomy while observation consolidates this finding. This view is more valid when students are given the freedom to choose the topic by themselves rather than being instructed to a pre-determined subject. Task type influences on learners' autonomy and hence on their oral engagement, for example, role play and free talk activities triggered active involvement, whereas, oral project presentation are less likely to arouse them. This in fact could be traced back to risk taking, and discomfort students may feel in front of a class, with a constant feeling of being under evaluation.

The present research suggests that learners' autonomy is an important factor in raising opportunities to engage in oral practices, so a need to cater for this element is deemed very crucial. For this reason, a number of suggestions and recommendations are proposed. Developing EFL learners' oral fluency in the classroom in our context, requires a change in some learning circumstances where learning takes place. Thus, teaching learners how to be fluent requires small groups where the teacher can follow the improvement of each student and design the oral practices according to learners' need. Therefore, the less number of students in an oral class the more opportunities for practice will be available.

Besides, developing learners' autonomy is not only the matter of teachers in the classroom rather than parents as well. Thus, parents have to push their children toward responsibility of one's own affairs to be autonomous in their life in general and their learning in particular.

Furthermore, if EFL autonomous learners share the same perception with their teachers about the purposes of an oral activity in the oral class; they may perform better and their oral fluency will be developed accordingly. Moreover, the use of conversations, free talk activities and role play as communicative activities develop learners' awareness to practice English language and therefore, develop their oral fluency in the classroom.

Besides, the use of classroom oral sketches may maximise the learners' opportunities to practice English language in an Algerian context.

Most EFL researchers interested in learning autonomy opted to understand what autonomy is and how it is necessary for learning to take place. It is important, for many researchers to make a link between autonomy and other language skills as speaking. The same as learning autonomy, language researchers investigated oral fluency in all its perspectives in isolation of learners' autonomy. Thus, it is necessary for EFL researchers opting to develop learners' oral fluency to investigate in depth the link that exists between autonomy and learners' oral fluency.

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Appendix I

The Students' Problem Identification Questionnaire

Dear students

I would very much appreciate if you can give some of your time to answer this questionnaire which is part of a research work that aims at helping foreign language learners adopt new successful methods in their learning process.

Your answers will be valuable for the accomplishment of this work, and will be treated with great confidence.

Please, **circle** the right answer:

- 1) Do you face difficulties to take part in an oral activity?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

If yes, what kind of difficulties?

- a. initiating a talk
- b. responding to the teachers 'questions
- c. producing feedback

- 2) Do you participate in an oral discussion?
 - a. Often
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Rarely

- 3) Do you ask for the teacher or the learner's help to solve a communicative problem?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

If yes whom do you ask often?

- a. The teacher
- b. The students

Thank you

Appendix II

Students 'Questionnaire

Dear students

I would very much appreciate if you can devote some of your time to answer this questionnaire which is part of a research work aiming at maximising EFL learners opportunities to learn the English language at the university of Bejaia.

Your answers will be taken into account as a worthy and reliable data about our theme of study; therefore, they will be treated with total care and confidence.

Section one: General characteristics of an autonomous language learner

Please Circle “○” the right answers as follow: 1=often; 2=sometimes; 3= never

During an oral class session

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. Do you set objectives for your own learning? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. Do you take initiatives .e.g. start a talk voluntarily? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. Do you wait for the teacher to point at you to speak? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. Do you take decisions on how to learn? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. Do you take decisions on the appropriate time for practice? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. Do you evaluate your progress as an EFL learner? | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Section two: EFL learners 'awareness of their autonomous oral practices

Make a circle “○” on the right answer as follow: 1=agree; 2= disagree; 3= neither agree nor disagree.

During an oral class session

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I should decide for the oral activities to work out by myself | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. I should participate in designing the oral activities for practice | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. I should be involved in selecting the teaching materials | 1 | 2 | 3 |

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4. I should take the responsibility for my own learning | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. I should set objectives for any oral activity I am involved in | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. I should take decisions on how I want to learn | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. I should take decisions on the “when” I want to learn | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. The teacher should behave as a guide in the classroom | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. I have to solve my communicative problems without the intervention of the teacher? | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Section three: Autonomy in practice during an oral expression session

Please make a **circle** “○” on the right answer as follows:

1=always; 2= sometimes; 3= rarely

During the oral expression session

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Do you initiate a talk during an oral expression session? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. Do you ask for clarification from your teacher? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. Do you prefer choosing the topic to be discussed by yourself? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. Do you decide on the type of activities to implement in the oral session? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. Do you reflect on your learning critically as an EFL learner? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. Do you assess your own progress mainly at the fluency level? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. Do you identify your needs as an EFL learner | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. Do you get profit from the opportunities provided to you to develop your oral fluency? | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Would you please say how?

Section four : Learners’ past learning experiences

Please read the following sentences, and answer with **Yes** or **No**

Appendix III

Observation Grid

Day:

Hour:

Building and room number:

Group:

Number of students:

Activities:

Autonomous behaviours	EFL Students															S
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	
1-Initiating a talk																
2-Interrupting teacher 's talk																
3 -Taking initiatives																
4-Asking for clarification																
5-Self-reliance																
6-Asking questions to the teacher																
7- Group Work																
8-Use of some communication strategies																
9-Answering questions voluntarily																
10-Motivated and enthusiastic																
11-Collaborating with the teacher																
12-Risk taking																