A Closer Look into Learner Autonomy in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Learner autonomy in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom involves conscious, reflective decisions and explicit procedures from students. When students participate actively, the process of internalizing the language becomes more meaningful since long-lasting linguistic goals are attained. This study investigates the role of learner autonomy and some possible consequences on achievement in a sample of six students in the English Teaching Major at UNA, Brunca extension. The data of the subjects were garnered through artifact collection (students' grades) and two questionnaires which were directed toward obtaining personal insights regarding learning situations and the subjects' autonomy.

Key words: learner-centered approach, learner autonomy, achievement, EFL, proficiency, learning strategies

Resumen

La autonomía del aprendiente en la clase de un idioma extranjero involucra decisiones reflexivas y conscientes así como también procedimientos explícitos por parte del estudiante. Cuando los estudiantes participan activamente, el proceso de internalización del lenguaje se vuelve más significativo puesto que ellos pueden lograr metas lingüísticas más duraderas. Este estudio investiga el papel de la autonomía del aprendiente y algunas posibles consecuencias en el rendimiento académico en una muestra de seis estudiantes de la carrera de la Enseñanza del Inglés en la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca. La información de los sujetos fue obtenida por medio de la recolección de artefactos (las calificaciones de los estudiantes) y dos cuestionarios dirigidos hacia la obtención de impresiones personales acerca de sus situaciones de aprendizaje y la autonomía de los sujetos.

Palabras claves: enfoque centrado en el estudiante, autonomía del aprendiente, rendimiento, enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, competencia, estrategias de aprendizaje

Introduction

Progressively more, global economy shapes educational policies. Current pedagogical decisions, consequently, are directed toward moving from the production of individuals with specific skills to the production of autonomous individuals who are able to grow through lifelong learning based on the ability to take control over situations in order to train themselves to meet any circumstance. In the light of this movement, learner-centered methodologies have unveiled students' active role when learning a foreign language. When types of methods shift the role of the instructors from givers of information to facilitators of student learning, pupils acquire independent responsibilities that shape their learning process. Additionally, learner-centered education has shown to increase motivation for learning and greater satisfaction with school duties; both of these outcomes lead to greater linguistic achievement. As a result of the key contribution of students' involvement in the EFL classroom, learner autonomy stands out. As defined by Holec (1981), it is the "ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p. 3). He also emphasized that it "is not inborn but must be acquired either by 'natural' means or (as most often happens) by formal learning, i.e. in a systematic, deliberate way" (p. 3). Additionally, learner autonomy is "[to] take charge of one's learning to have […] the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning […]" (p. 3). Based on this premise, a descriptive research was conducted to gather revealing information about current practices and general knowledge from the students' perspective.

Literature Review

Autonomy: Definition and Origin

The concept of autonomy in education dates back more than half a century ago. According to linguistic scholars the term was first introduced in the 1950s. In 1970 they conducted studies on learners' autonomy and its implications in education (Zhuang, 2010, p. 591). Education, like in a pendulum, has moved from one end to the other; one end represents the teacher-centered end and the other the student-centered end. This evolution in education has been mostly dictated by the transformation of the students' roles in the classroom from highly dependent to interdependent, and later to independent.

The concept of autonomy per se denotes a psychological, social and emotional inner process. Students' rupture from the teacher's total control has given rise to a feeling of autonomy. Henry Holec (as cited in Zhuang, 2010, p. 591) was the one that first introduced the concept of autonomous learning in foreign language teaching (FLT). But what does this concept stand for? Autonomous FLT minimizes the teacher's domain to a certain extent. The teacher is not a transmitter of knowledge anymore but an instructor or supervisor in the learning process (Zhuang, 2010, p. 593). English learner autonomy sheds light

upon student centeredness; namely, learners systematize their own learning. Little (2004) defined autonomy as "learning how to learn intentionally" (p. 105). From this perspective learners' self-awareness of their own techniques, strategies, motivation, strengths and weaknesses comes to prominence. The ordinary spoon-fed methodology is abandoned to reorient students' maximum potential as important agents inside and outside the classroom. The role of the learner is crucial as to how to define his or her own path to success. Becoming self-conscious about what to do, where to go, or how to undertake the proper actions to improve one's learning is the premise of language success. Autonomy, though how far-fetched it may seem, empowers learners to become independent, self-reliant, accountable for their own learning (Little, 2003, p. 90). This implies a reflective involvement which underpins a process of planning, monitoring and evaluating. For learners to be able to do this, three key terms come into light: self-appraisal, self-regulation and personal accountability.

Self-appraisal accounts for the benefits gained throughout the process of ascending from dependence to interdependence with regard to learner affect. Confidence, motivation, and interest heighten self-appraisal by boosting learner autonomy. Motivation nourishes learners' inner drives, desires goals, expectations and their willingness to stand out in his struggle to get language proficiency. Little (2004) showed that if motivation is involved in learning, management is shaped according to the learners' developing interest (p.105).

Self-regulation is dictated by the learners' introspective awareness and control of their mental processes. As learners "select, evaluate and revise or abandon the task, goals and strategies, they self-regulate their learning" (Harwood, 2010, p. 182). These actions reveal pedagogical procedures that enable the learners to increase their awareness about learning, and, at the same time, develop effective skills. As for personal accountability, the learners, in this process of detachment from the teacher's control, develop a high sense of personal engagement, belonging and responsibility. The level of interest in their own progress is characterized by constant devotion to practice and a deep analysis of what went wrong or right during the development of the activities. All these features delineate the core of an autonomy-oriented curriculum.

The Autonomy-oriented Curriculum

Engagement and detachment are necessary in an EFL curriculum whose ultimate goal is students' autonomy. In a language curriculum where students are the center of it, educators must be trained to understand learning as a process in which the social-interactive and individual cognition dimension are mutually dependent and supportive of each other. Educators must aid learners to develop both management skills in the target language by using scaffolding techniques and negotiation and their capacities to support individual and whole group learning. Language learning is undertaken individually, but with the open interaction among learners and with the teacher. As Little (2004) once

claimed learners are co-owners of the learning environment since the activities and projects developed in a learner-centered class yield a multitude of vocabulary learning and community interaction (p. 107). The most salient features of this type of curriculum must be specified to teachers in order to guarantee the evolution of students from dependence to interdependence.

Little in one of his studies (2003) declared that "without connection people cannot grow, yet without separation they cannot relate" (p. 30). From this standpoint, learner engagement is seen as a social element necessary for the dependence and independence phases of autonomy. He went on to say that EFL success is attributable to three main aspects (Little, 2004, p.119). Firstly, since learners are beginning their route to native-like language proficiency, they must be involved in their own learning. They must be empowered to take maximum control and determine the shape and direction of their learning. Secondly, learners must be confronted with their performance. They must be taught to think in retrospection in order to evaluate and revisit what they have done, what they are doing and what they will be doing. Thirdly, learners are challenged to use the target language both as a medium of communication and reflection.

Autonomy, briefly described, is underpinned by three main elements which are motivation (Ushioda, 1996, as cited in Reinders, p. 41), awareness (van Lier, 1996, as cited in Reinders, p. 41) and interaction (Kohonen, 1990, as cited in Reinders, p. 41). These three elements guarantee the success of a language curriculum encrypted in autonomy-based principles. On the face of this, the autonomy-oriented curriculum promotes in the learners a potential of who actively shapes their learning experience and reaches self-development as well as self-fulfillment in the long run. To attain the right path to learner autonomy, a direct and practical classroom instruction is essential.

Autonomy in the EFL Classroom

Linguists and pedagogists have concluded that "the scope of [one's] autonomy always depends on what we can already do" (Little, 2004, p. 106). Grounded on this assumption, the EFL students act on what they can actually perform and handle. It is for the teacher to withdraw the students' existing knowledge to explicit awareness through the development of in-and-out of classroom activities. For most scholars, learning is seen as a spiral process where new levels of autonomy are acquired as the learners move through new phases of independence (Little, 2003, p.29). This is clearly perceived as the learners become more confident and "pedagogically mature." This maturity provokes an introspective analysis of every step the learners take to carry out classroom activities. This process of revisiting their own experience ensures the learners effective process of overcoming weaknesses and enhancing strengths. It is through this process of self-management and self-instruction that the learners achieve optimal language learning success.

According to Leni Dam (as cited in Little, 2004, p.18) the way by which autonomy sets in the classroom highly depends on the decisions made by the learners. Based on Dam's assumptions, the learners must be involved in a non-stop quest for good learning activities. They partake in the decision-making process of selecting the most suitable activities according to their interests, expectations and desires. She also declared that in an autonomy-oriented classroom the learners choose their own targets and activities, feel obliged to keep a written record of their learning activities and evaluate learning regularly (as cited in Little, 2004, p.18). In like manner, Benson (as cited in Inozu, 2010, p. 523) assumed that "learner-centered practice generates autonomy" in the language classroom.

Little (2004) shed light upon four beliefs that elucidate learner autonomy in the EFL classroom. Firstly, the learner is in total control of his or her own learning. Secondly, the capacity of the individual learner to work alone develops learning language skills in collaboration with the rest of the peers. Thirdly, both language learning and language use are maximized throughout the process. Hayo Reinders (2010) threw light upon some of the stages that contribute to instill autonomy in the classroom (p. 46). In summary, they are identifying needs, setting goals, planning learning, selecting resources, selecting learning strategies, practicing, monitoring progress and assessing and revising. All this responsibility that is delegated by teachers and shouldered by learners has provoked imminent changes in the teachers' roles recently.

The Teacher's Roles in the Autonomy-oriented EFL Classroom

One may still wonder, what is left to the teacher if the learners are given total control of their instruction? Although handing over control to the learners implies the teacher's stepping out of the picture, the teacher still remains as an indirect and supportive agent in the process. The function of a teacher is not only passing along knowledge anymore.

Not long ago the teacher took pride in his or her authority, management and knowledge inside the classroom. As clarified earlier, since autonomy was anchored in language learning contexts, a change in roles has been undertaken by the teacher. Firstly, there was a change from transmitter of knowledge to "an instructor or supervisor in learning" (Zhuang, 2010, p. 592). The teacher's monologue has gradually disappeared to revive the student's voice, thoughts and ideas; the learner could also share significant decisions with the teacher about the learning process as to what activities, goals and materials to use. Secondly, there is the one change in the role from an orchestra leader or a commander to an advisor. The teacher abandons the function of passing along knowledge and strictly orchestrating every learning detail to place high premium on the role of advisor. The teacher resorts to this role when he or she advises about learning matters, examines the materials chosen by the students and provides further recommendations. It is noteworthy to mention that "learner autonomy doesn't mean learner isolation" (Little, 2003, p.30). Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of

development and learning relates both collaboration and autonomy, being the latter central to all learning and the basis on which learners move from one stage to the other (Little, 2003, p.30). Vygotsky perceived the profound implications the organization of language learning in educational environments brings about. One example of how learning can be organized is pointed out by Little who proposed three main pedagogical principles on which learning should be based.

Little's Pedagogical Principles of Autonomy

The importance of helping students become more autonomous in their language learning has reached impetus and prominence in today's language curricula. According to Inozu (2010), Little clearly defined autonomy from a more psychological dimension. He affirmed that autonomy "is the capacity for detachment, critical reflection; it involves a decision-making process and independent action" (Little, 1991, p.4). In the light of his definition, Little (2004) detailed three main pedagogical principles: learner empowerment, learner reflection and appropriate target language use (p.119). Concerning the first principle, the teacher's role is modified to just initiate, support and direct the learning activities; on the contrary, the learners get a more significant role once they take up control of the rest of the learning process. The learners explore new areas that lead them to assume responsibility. Learners are also taught to collaborate and share responsibility in learning projects. Learner reflection accounts for the ability built by the learners to think introspectively. They self-assess their strengths and weaknesses so as to give an appropriate focus and twist to the next phase of learning or activity. The latter principle stands for how the target language is embraced since the beginning of the process. The teacher "manages classroom discourse in such a way that learners are able to use the target language for genuine communication purpose" (Little, 2004, p.120). Learners are aided throughout this experience with "the construction of meaning that lies beyond the range of their current proficiency" (p. 22). Not only does autonomy determine success in language proficiency but also the language learning strategies the learners have decided to use.

Language Learning Strategies

Due to the orientation that this study has, learning strategies are remarkable elements to consider. Basically, towards the route to language success, the EFL learner moves from one stage of autonomy to the other. This movement or evolution is originated by the establishment of learning strategies. How autonomous a learner becomes highly depends on how solid and effective these strategies are. Oxford (2001) prescribed the aim of language learning strategies as being oriented towards the development of communicative competence. She categorized language learning strategies (LLS) into two main classes: direct and

indirect and added six subdivisions of these three. In Oxford's system, metacognitive strategies empower the learner to self-regulate and organize his learning. Affective strategies deal with learner's affect and emotional factors such as confidence, while social strategies boost the use of the target language through the interaction set with peers inside and outside the classroom. Cognitive strategies are the mental strategies learners use to make sense of their learning; memory strategies are mechanisms used for storage of information, and compensation strategies aid the learners to keep the flow of communication by overcoming knowledge gaps.

The use of language learning strategies by learners clearly broadens the possibility for language success. Much of the recent work done in the area of autonomy sheds light upon the importance of teaching the use of these strategies directly. Students must become commanders of their own learning; they must be accountable for what they know or they do not know, and this can only be achieved by the management of this set of mechanisms Oxford provided.

The Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine the role of learner autonomy in the academic achievement and linguistic performance of EFL students. The many theoretical contributions of the use of an independent learning approach have called for concern on current practices that may be redirected, reinforced or even replicated.

The Research Questions

The central research questions that this study aimed to answer are:
- What is the role of autonomous learning in a group of students of the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension?
- What is the influence of learner autonomy on these students' academic achievement?
- Which are the learning strategies most used by a group of students of the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension?

Research Methodology

The Participants

The target group in this study is composed of six students of the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. Two of them are in their second year of instruction while three of them are in their third year. One

informant is in her fourth and last year. Four of these informants have failed in at least one course in contrast with two students who have never failed. Their proficiency level ranks from A2 to B1 according to the bands stipulated by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Their ages range from 20 to 25 years old. A random sampling method was used to select them. They were chosen from a list of 83 students currently enrolled in this program.

The Instruments

Three different instruments to gather data were used for this study. The Learner Autonomy Test was adapted from Dafei (2007) which was intended to gather key data about the informants' autonomous learning behavior. For the second questionnaire, the same informants completed a chart that revealed experiences outside and inside the classroom regarding the use of learning strategies based on Oxford's SILL questionnaire (see appendices). Artifact collection was the last data gathering instrument used. Through it, students' grades were compiled and analyzed.

Analysis and Results

An exhaustive examination of students' responses and data gathered led the next analysis. Each of the research questions is answered in this section.

Results and discussion of question 1- What is the role of autonomous learning in a group of students of the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension?

In order to fully understand students' level of autonomy, the learners were requested to complete a test in the form of a questionnaire. This instrument gathered data through a 20-item five-point Likert scale ('always' -strongly agree-, 'often' –agree-, 'sometimes' -somehow disagree -, 'rarely'-disagree- and 'never'- strongly disagree-). An operational definition of the grades of this test was established to quantify learners' autonomous behavior (see table 2. 1). Students with grades above 80 were categorized as *highly autonomous;* learners with grades from 60 to 79 were identified as *somehow autonomous* while the ones with grades below 60 were considered *non-autonomous*. The analysis revealed that five out of the six students rank into the *somehow autonomous* and one student in the *non-autonomous* one. None of the informants could be identified as *highly autonomous*. Based on these results, it can be stated that learners' autonomy is not a significantly positive finding since they do not portray a high independent behavior. However, it is a positive finding to identify only one student with a non-autonomous behavior.

Table 1
Students' Grades in the Autonomy Test

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Autonomy Test scores	67.5	6	5.93

Results and discussion of question 2- What is the influence of learner autonomy on the students' academic achievement?

The informants' academic achievement was measured by analyzing a grade record that included all students' final scores during their major and a record of their grades in this semester. The mean of their grades was used as the equivalent grade (see figure 2.2). Four out of the six informants have never failed a course. One of them has failed eight courses, another student dropped one course and two of them dropped two courses. A surprising finding is that revealed by student five (see the table below) that shows that although she is the informant with the lowest autonomy (based on the test), she had the highest academic achievement. On the other hand, student three obtained both a low level of autonomy and low achievement. Student four showed a high score in both. These findings, except for student four, suggest that students' autonomy has a congruent relationship, and students who are *somehow autonomous* have an average academic achievement. They do not excel with high grades and are not labeled as *highly autonomous.* Students commented that there are key factors that can influence their achievement negatively which are, basically, lack of support at home, unclear instructions and lack of time organization. They also explained that they have improved their achievement through constant use of songs. They even mentioned transcribing and memorizing the lyrics as an example. They insisted that some actions that they ignore but should take are the following: to participate in online practices, keep conversations with native speakers, attend tutorials and set an organized schedule to study. The findings in this study reveal that for most students, to have a high level of learning autonomy leads to a high academic achievement.

Table 2
Students' Academic Achievement and Autonomy

Student	Autonomy Test	Academic Achievement Mean
S1	6.9	7.4
S2	7.1	8.0
S3	6.5	7.5
S4	7.5	8.4

S5	5.6	9.7
S6	6.9	7.5

Note: List of students follows a random order. Ten is the highest grade for both descriptions.

Results and discussion of question 3- Which are the learning strategies most used by a group of students of the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension?
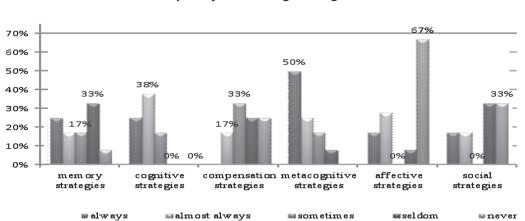
These data were gathered and analyzed through a questionnaire in which students completed 24 items in a five-point Likert scale. Their responses revealed the use of specific learning strategies both inside and outside the classroom. In this particular study, informants stated that the category of strategies they use the most is metacognitive ones, from which setting goals, arranging conditions that help, focusing attention on a task and seeking opportunities for practice were listed (see table 2.3). In contrast with this finding, learners answered that the strategies they use the least are the social ones. Some of these are asking questions, co-operating with others. These results evidence that students take responsibility for their own learning process. They do not depend on the teacher's but they are exercising control over language experiences. However, some lack of socialization and mutual support among learners is also evidenced. Additional to this analysis, a scrutiny of the frequency of use of each LLS was conducted (see figure 2.1). Cognitive strategies were reported to be used more frequently. Indeed, the ranks "seldom" and "never" were not used. It reveals that reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, reorganizing information and practicing formally may be familiar actions taken by students, which was not the case for memory strategies; this type of strategy amounted a high percentage under the "seldom" and "never" categories. A similar case was found when the compensation strategies were analyzed. A high frequency of seldom and never categories were registered.
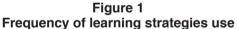
Table 3
Language Learning strategies used the most

| | OC | IC |
	M	M
Memory strategies	3.8	3.5
Cognitive strategies	4.6	3.8
Compensation strategies	3.1	3.6
Metacognitive strategies	5.2	4.0
Affective strategies	2.4	4.8
Social strategies	3.0	3.2

Note: M stands for *mean*. Rated on a 5-point Likert 5= 'always' -strongly agree-, 4= 'often' -agree-, 3= 'sometimes' -somehow disagree-, 2= 'seldom' -disagree- and 1= 'never' -strongly disagree-. OC= outside the classroom behavior, IC= in the classroom behavior.

Figure 1
Frequency of learning strategies use

Note: Frequency of use of language according to the informants' response. Bars represent each category in a Likert scale. Only the highest and the lowest percentages are included.

This analysis evidences that informants' preference of LLS use is the following: metacognitive, cognitive, memory, compensation, social and affective. However, memory strategies can be defined as one of the strategies least used since they are seldom or never used. Additional to the Likert section, informants gave their personal strategies in an open-ended question. They responded that outside the classroom they also read dictionaries, watch TV shows and transcribe dialogues, read books and participate in blogs. Together with this, informants were asked if they have attended a workshop or training regarding the use of LLS, specifically, metacognitive ones. Their answers were negative which shows a lack of deductive instruction on learner empowerment and reflection in the program.

Conclusions

From the previous analysis and theoretical information provided, significant conclusions are drawn. First, it was denoted that the higher the autonomy level, the more successful the linguistic achievement will be. This level of autonomy, as shown by the participants of this study, highly depends on either the learning strategies each learner has devised along the path or the instruction and impact teachers have had on the student's learning. These first results of the study are properly grounded on the research conducted by Zhuang (2010) and

Little (2004) who revealed how learners' autonomy positively affects their linguistic development by promoting independence, self-reliance and accountability in them. In like manner, memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies promote autonomous learning which, as confirmed in this research, leads to a modification of students' academic achievement. This result is supported by Oxford's assumptions that throw light upon the use of all these types of learning strategies to significantly improve the learning process of the language. Furthermore, teachers need to provide deductive instruction regarding the use of LLS at early stages of the language learning process. In terms of instruction, the role of the teacher in the EFL class has a crucial effect on students' accomplishment. This conclusion is akin to one of Little's that emphasizes the role of the teacher as key to promote independence.

Students learn to manipulate their own learning process and benefit from all possible actions when being EFL learners at the very beginning and throughout their linguistic development. These actions, when successful, remain in the learners' repertoire of top learning techniques for very long and, eventually, will help them reach the desired linguistic achievement. Every single action that learners take contributes, sooner or later, to the learners' accomplishment of linguistic proficiency and enhancement of autonomous behavior. This remark is supported by one of Little's four beliefs that states that language learning and language use are maximized throughout the process in an autonomy-based class. The selection of these actions stems from the students' critical awareness which, in turn, develops through the use of conscious mechanisms. This learner's psychological detachment and the ability to reflect critically are pointed out in Little's theoretical contributions. It is clearly evident that in every informant's case analyzed autonomy has not been the goal but a primary characteristic of their learning process. The last conclusion drawn is that boosting autonomy is not an easy endeavor in the EFL class. There must be commitment on both parts, teachers' and students', to vary the orientation of current trends in teaching and learning.

Recommendations

The next recommendations are of high concern for English language teachers, instructors and pedagogists in general whose orientation is to shape more autonomous learners. Due to the clear benefits of students' personal accountability, a metacognitive strategies training should be scheduled in any language curriculum. A clear constraint of this study is the limited sample used. A further study with a larger sample is suggested as well as a deeper immersion into the social and affective factors involved since those two strategies are highly ignored by the informants.

Based on the results derived, a handout for students incorporating concrete actions that they can take to develop autonomy when learning a foreign language was designed and it is suggested to be used. By following

Little's contribution on the topic, this handout delineates a flexible path to follow. He outlined three main principles of autonomy which are learner empowerment, learner reflection and appropriate target language use. These principles are the foundation of a kit proposed to boost independent language learning. The handout is divided into two main parts: the students' handout and the teacher's handout. The former includes the concrete steps pupils can follow while the latter embraces not only those steps but theoretical background and advice for instruction. Teachers must always consider new opportunities to hand over control to their learners and help them build their autonomy. The development of learner autonomy must be acknowledged as a significant key to language success and should be regarded by teachers as well as by students to extend and maximize their proficiency in English.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Questionnaire adapted from Dafei

Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension
Researchers: M. A. Lenna Barrantes Elizondo
M.A. Cinthya Olivares Garita
Instrument: Test for students
Place of Administration: Universidad Nacional
Target Group: students in the English Teaching Major
Research Topic : Learner Autonomy
Date of Administration:

Instrument #1: Learner Autonomy Test

Objective: This questionnaire aims at collecting data about the role of learner autonomy in students in the English teaching major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. The information you provide will be used for academic purposes only. Thank you very much for your help!

Instructions: In order to solve this questionnaire please circle the one closest answers to the following questions according to your true cases. Use the chart below as reference.

A=Always	B=Often	C=Sometimes	D=Rarely	E=Never
I always experience, do or know about this when learning English.	I often experience, do or know about this when learning English.	Sometimes I experience, do or know about this when learning English.	I rarely experience, do or know about this when learning English.	I never experience, do or know about this when learning English.

Part I

1. I think I have the ability to learn English well.	A B C D E
2. I make good use of my free time in English study.	A B C D E
3. I preview before the class.	A B C D E
4. I find I can finish my task in time.	A B C D E
5. I keep a record of my study, such as keeping a diary, writing review etc.	A B C D E
6. I make self-exam with the exam papers chosen by myself.	A B C D E
7. I reward myself such as going shopping, playing etc. when I make progress.	A B C D E
8. I attend out-class activities to practice and learn the language.	A B C D E
9. During the class, I try to catch chances to take part in activities such as pair/group discussion, role-play, etc.	A B C D E
10. I know my strengths and weaknesses in my English study.	A B C D E
11. I choose books, exercises which suit me, neither too difficult nor too easy.	A B C D E

Part II
Choose the option that best fits your situation. You can choose more than one.

1. I study English here due to:
   a. my parents' demand
   b. curiosity
   c. getting a good job
   d. interest in English culture, such as film, sports, music, etc.

2. I think the learner-teacher relationship is that of:
   a. receiver and giver
   b. raw material and maker
   c. customer and shopkeeper
   d. partners
   e. explorer and director

3. I think my success or failure in English study is mainly due to:
   a. luck or fate
   b. English-studying environment
   c. studying aids
   d. teachers
   e. myself

4. Whether students should design the teaching plan together with teachers or not, my opinion is:
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. neutral
   d. oppose
   e. strongly oppose

5. When the teacher asks questions for us to answer, I would mostly like to:
   a. wait for others' answers
   b. think and answer
   c. use books, dictionaries
   d. clarify questions with teachers
   e. join a pair/group discussion

6. When I meet a word I don't know, I mainly:
   a. let it go
   b. ask others
   c. guess the meaning
   d. look in the dictionary

7. When I make mistakes, I usually prefer:
   a. to ignore them
   b. to be corrected by teachers
   c. to be corrected by my classmates
   d. to use books or dictionaries to verify

8. When I am asked to use technologies that I haven't used before
   a. I usually try to learn new skills
   b. I learn them following others
   c. I feel worried, but I don't care much
   d. I put it off or try to avoid it
   e. I resist using them

9. I think the following way is most useful in my English study:
   a. taking notes
   b. mechanic memory
   c. doing exercises of grammar, translation

d. classifying or grouping or comparing
e. group discussion

10. I usually use materials selected:
a. only by teachers
b. mostly by teachers
c. by teachers and by myself
d. mostly by myself
e. only by myself

This test was adapted from Dafei which was taken from D. Dafei (2007), An exploration of the relationship between learner autonomy and English proficiency. *Asian EFL Journal*. Japan: Academic Publishing House, 1-23.

Appendix 2: SILL questionnaire (adapted)

Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension
Researchers: M. A. Lenna Barrantes Elizondo
M.A. Cinthya Olivares Garita
Instrument: Questionnaire for students
Place of Administration: Universidad Nacional
Target Group: students in the English Teaching Major
Research Topic : Learner Autonomy-Learning Strategies
Date of Administration:

Instrument #1: Questionnaire for students

Objective: This questionnaire aims at collecting data about learning styles and strategies of students in the English teaching major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. The information you provide will be used for academic purposes only. Thank you very much for your help!

PART 1: Instructions: In order to solve this questionnaire please write a check mark (√) in the box that best describes your true cases.

Before an oral presentation, I …	**Always**	**Almost always**	**Some-times**	**Seldom**	**Never**
use semantic mapping to organize ideas.					
review most grammatical structures I will use.					
practice/rehearse my presentation.					
analyze possible expressions I can use.					

translate my ideas.

get help from others (teachers, class-mates, tutors, friends)

set specific goals.

identify the purpose of the activity.

use relaxation techniques (tea, music, aromatherapy, yoga)

write in my learning diary.

work together with other classmates .

A strategy I use that was not mentioned in the previous list is….

During class, I …	Always	Almost always	Some-times	Seldom	Never
place new words or expressions that I heard or read into a context to remember them.					
use semantic mapping to organize informa-tion.					
translate phrases and words.					
take notes.					
switch to the mother tongue for clarifica-tion.					
make up new words to communicate when I don't know the right words.					
write new words I hear and read.					
pay attention and focus on activities, expla-nations and instructions.					
use positive statements to myself regularly.					
like to participate regardless of the possibil-ity of making mistakes.					
like to work in groups.					
A strategy I use that was not mentioned in the previous list is….					

As part of my independent learning process, I...	Always	Almost always	Some-times	Seldom	Never
associate new words I hear and read with else (image, sound, previously learned word).					
identify a familiar word in my mother tongue that sounds like the new word.					
listen to native speaking performance on a tape repeatedly.					

repeat the words (mentally or aloud).

ask someone for help in conversations.

avoid communication when difficulties are encountered.

create the best physical environment.

keep a language learning notebook.

listen to my favorite music before studying.

keep a learning diary.

discuss the learning process with somebody else.

A strategy I use that was not mentioned in the previous list is….

PART 2: Answer the next questions regarding your experience as an EFL learner.

1. What personal or individual aspects influence your academic achievement?
2. Are there actions you can take to improve your academic achievement? Which ones?

This questionnaire was adapted from the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) designed by Rebecca Oxford which is included in her book *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*.