



BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA



FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

How autonomous learning influences LEI students' learning
process at BUAP

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Presented by

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This project would not be possible without the influence of my teachers.

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Dedications

Shout-out to the old me.

For all those times, I was sitting alone at home with the lights out. For all those times, I thought no one else was behind me. For all those times, I doubted myself as other people do.

Abstract

This paper presents the results and reflections from a study conducted with LEI students preparing to become English teachers. The purpose of the research was to establish the importance of autonomous learning during the learning process, illustrating how this correlation offers students benefits to their professional preparation and discussing the advantages of using learning strategies. Data was collected using quantitative methodology. The sample consisted of 80 students enrolled in their fourth semester taking the *Taller de Materiales tradicionales y Digitales* course. It summarizes the concept of autonomous learning and outlines strategies to promote autonomy in education. It also defines the characteristics of autonomy and discusses the stages to achieve it.

Keywords: autonomous learning, learning process, perceptions.

Table of contents

Acknowledgments	3
Dedications	4
Abstract	5
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	8
1.1 Introduction to the problem	8
1.2 Research setting	8
1.3 Aims of the study	8
1.4 Research questions	9
1.5 Justification	9
1.6 Key terms	10
1.7 Conclusion	12
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 The importance of English as a Foreign language	13
2.2 The English language in Mexico	14
2.3 The English Language in Higher Education	15
2.4 The learning process of the English language	17
2.5 Autonomous learning	19
2.6 Strategies to promote learning autonomy	20
2.7 Characteristics of an autonomous learner	23
2.8 How to evaluate autonomous learning in the English learning process	25
2.9 Autonomous learning in the English learning process	26
2.10 Stages of achieving autonomous learning	27
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	29
3.1 Introduction	29
3.2 Research design	29
3.3 Subjects	30
3.4 Instrument	31
3.5 Data Collection Procedures	32
3.6 Data Analysis Procedures	33

3.7 Conclusion	33
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS	34
4.1 Introduction	34
4.2 Research questions	34
4.3 Answers to Research Questions	34
4.3.1 What does autonomous learning mean to LEI students?	34
4.3.2 How does autonomous learning influence the students' learning process?	45
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION	54
5.1 Introduction	54
5.2 Summary of the findings	54
5.3 Accomplishments of the aims	55
5.4 Limitations of the study	55
5.5 Suggestions for further research	56
5.6 Personal reflection	56
REFERENCES	58

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the problem

The reality in the higher education community should prioritize active participation and promote a high level of awareness respecting the learning process. University students need to regulate their learning process, combine and modify different learning strategies to improve outcomes and determine and self-assess their learning results.

Therefore, learners should have the ability to recognize their learning necessities besides the step-by-step of their learning process. In other words, learners can distinguish, select, and decide the needed steps to achieve specific learning objectives, stated by themselves in formal or in informal education. During the last decades, Mexican education has allowed students to be part of a passive learning process. To illustrate, students from the beginning of their academic education tend to follow instructions, memorize grammatical content, and repeat procedures even when they cannot recognize the utility of this gained knowledge.

For this reason, the following research paper attempts to determine the relationship between autonomy learning respect to students learning process. Specifically, to outline how much this influence affects English students' training. In parallel, to argue the importance of strategies employed by students to work independently rather than in a collaborative form.

1.2 Research setting

The following research takes place at the Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla located in Puebla, Mexico City. The Facultad de Lenguas offers two majors in teaching, one in English and another in French. This study will be focused on students from Teaching English major, specifically students in their fourth semester taking *Materiales tradicionales y digitales* course.

1.3 Aims of the study

The purpose of the following research is to establish the relevance of autonomous learning in LEI students.

Then, the study focuses on three sections to identify the possible influence between autonomy and the learning process.

First, distinguish the kind of relationship between autonomous learning and students' learning process. Second, illustrate how this connection can stimulate benefits during learners' professional development. Third, discuss how helpful are the learning strategies implemented by LEI students in a course from the English language teaching major.

1.4 Research questions

As mentioned above, the research focuses on the student-teacher learning process. For that reason, questions endeavor to state a definition of autonomy from the perspective of learners. Then, attempt to clarify how this relation produces significance in learners' development. Lastly, it attempts to name the practicality of learning strategies employed by learners.

The following questions will conduct this study:

RQ1. What does autonomous learning mean to LEI students?

RQ2. How does autonomous learning influence the students' learning process?

1.5 Justification

Previous studies have discussed the role of teachers and students when learning a foreign language. It also has reviewed the effectiveness of diverse techniques and methods when teaching and learning a different language. Furthermore, the areas of translation show analyses related to students' efforts to acquire a foreign language. Nonetheless, talking about pedagogy studies provide an extensive database about dilemmas encountered when becoming an English teacher. However, studies related to the professional development of English student-teachers appear to be slightly studied. Hence, the importance of stimulating more researchers focused on this area.

Nowadays, the technology and science industry advances faster than in the last decades. Therefore, the literary society has a necessity for a better mastery of knowledge. In the case of teaching, the student-teacher formation and the setting of English teachers' growth reflect changes. Moreover, talking concerning students' learning process could be prolonged and expanded because of autonomous learning. As been seen, Education is a constant cycle of learning that deserves to be studied.

1.6 Key terms

Autonomous learning. In the field of education and language learning Little, Freire, Sionis, Benson, and Voller (as cited in Joshi, 2011) highlight autonomous learning following these aspects:

1. It is an ability enriched as much as a learner regulates it.
2. It is an independent action of decision-making.
3. It creates and redoes situations of learning.
4. It identifies learning needs.
5. It determines self-objectives.
6. It takes responsibility for the self-regulation of the procedure.
7. It can transfer that knowledge into varied contexts.

As can be observed, it is an entire operation that expects self-commitment from the learner. Indeed, Johnson and Morikawa (as cited in Herrera, 2016) outline that this aptitude requires guidance towards learning management.

Learning process. Over the last years, the academic field has adjusted to the national, local, and institutional learning tendencies despite several educational learning theories. In this case, the study takes into consideration behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism.

First of all, Skinner's method theory of learning is better known as behaviorism. According to this approach, the learning process occurs in a modest cycle determined by operant conditioning: reinforcement and punishment. The first concept refers to individual behavior. Positive reinforcement strengthens conduct by providing a reward, whereas negative reinforcement attempts to remove or stop an unpleasant experience. The second term, punishment, is characterized because it strives to eliminate a

response instead of increasing it (GSI Teaching & Resource Center, 2019); (McLeod, 2017). In other words, behaviorism learning theory focuses on individual behavior because of its objectivity and visibility.

In the second place is the theory of cognitive development, proposed by Jean Piaget. This theory involves three components: schemas, adaptation, and equilibration that support. Schemas are essentially building blocks representing knowledge. These allow a person to express the world through mental representations and be prepared to respond. Moreover, schemas are a manner of organizing knowledge and classify new information into units of information. As Wadsworth (as cited in McLeod, 2018, p. 56) states, "adaptation is the process of intellectual growth." In this case, *assimilation* could occur, that is, the action of incorporating new information into an existing schema. Besides, *accommodation* is a process that involves changing or altering the known schemas when current information is received. The stage of balance between assimilation and accommodation is known as equilibration (Cherry, 2020). In other words, an individual's schema can deal with most new information skillfully. Therefore, cognitive theory pretends to understand the process when current information incorporates into existing knowledge.

Finally, the theory of constructivism implies two fundamental elements. The first highlights that learners need to be active rather than passive to develop the ability to self-regulate all new information gathered (Olusegen, 2015). The second element assures that learners can construct new knowledge by themselves according to their age and experiences. Thus, the learning process is improved as long as learners experience the world (Austin, Orcutt & Rosso, 2001). In short, the constructive theory involves active participation from students to create knowledge and develop the ability to recreate settings to readjust new information.

Understandably, the learning process is a cycle that tends to repeat each step. In the same way, this process involves several actions that allow learners to increase their understanding. Indeed, this procedure needs a basement to prolong continuous learning. That is, to have the ability to recall information gathered previously and to recognize and reorganize new pieces of knowledge. Then, remembering the series of actions to achieve a task and developing the capacity to create settings where learning

occurs should let students improve their learning process. For the present study learning process is the way to acquire knowledge.

Perceptions. Language and perception have been emphasized in studies analyzing the impact on the language learning process. As Barbot and Camatarri point out (as cited in Despaigne, 2010, p. 58), “the notion of perception refers to a group of attitudes and ideas, sometimes even stereotypes that the person conveys in an unconscious way that affects the student’s learning process”.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a general overview of this research study and the concerns over the theme. As can be seen, it mentions descriptions of the introduction to the problem, research setting, aims of the study, research questions, justification of the study, and fundamental terms.

In chapter two, the literature review discusses theoretical concepts considered indispensable to provide a framework for this research. Thus, the literature review will offer readers information concerning the importance of exploring autonomy regardless of students learning process.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for the current study. It is fundamental to provide information on the role of the English language as a foreign language regardless of Mexican higher education. Furthermore, it is essential to define concepts connected with the learning process, autonomous learning, strategies, and principal characteristics. Finally, information about how to evaluate autonomy and the stages of achieving autonomous learning are analyzed.

2.1 The importance of English as a foreign language

In the last years, the English language has been the most learned and spoken in the world. It has become a lingua franca in communication, science, technology, businesses, and entertainment (British Council, 2013). According to Mastin (2011, para. 3), the increase in language use is due to three main aspects "the number of countries using it as their first language or mother-tongue, the number of countries adopting it as their official language, and the number of countries teaching it as their foreign language of choice in schools".

As can be seen, English became a global language, not because of the number of native speakers but because other nations took up and recognized it as a medium of communication and as a source to access knowledge (Crystal, 2003). Most of the time, people associate English proficiency as a provider of unlimited opportunities and advantages. Benefits such as obtaining a scholarship abroad, getting a job promotion, or sharing and publishing studies are some advantages of the English language (Guerrero, 2010).

From the background above, several factors make the English language essential to communication in our current time. Illustrated by Halliday (as cited in Parkinson, 2013), he emphasizes English for specific purposes supports the recognition of scientific articles. In other words, the difference between two individuals who are experts in the same field is the proficiency to use the English language as a key to demonstrate his knowledge and professional abilities. Along with this, the facility to access and publish research enables professionals to be part of the international community. Therefore, it is

preferable to publish research in the English language rather than in the writer's mother tongue (Crystal, 2003; Nunan, 2003b).

In particular, as López-Navarro, Moreno, Quintanilla, and Rey-Rocha (2015, p. 4) declare, "many non-Anglophone researchers reserve their best work for international mainstream journals published in English." As Nunan (2003b) explains, professionals who do not have English as a mother tongue or second language face disadvantages with colleagues who already domain the language. Altogether, the English language usage in the world as a lingua franca arises a vast possibility to enrich oneself in the professional field and personal life.

In the case of Mexico, this phenomenon occurs too. The current student community attempts to domain the English language for their professional field. However, the proficiency of the English language in the actual context differs from reality. Nonetheless, perceptions of the utility are highly positive in the university community.

2.2 The English language in Mexico

In our country, perceptions of the English language have changed in the last decades. Due to Mexico and the US relationship, both nations intertwine cultural, social, and historical influences. In this respect, Despaigne (2010) claims in her research study *The Difficulties of Learning English: Perceptions and Attitudes in Mexico*, students associated the desire of learning English as a foreign language with the existing situations living in the north of Mexico as immigration, racism, and the border.

The principal reason for the Mexican students to learn English is to aspire to obtain a better-paid job opportunity, so in the future, they progress economically (Borjian, 2015; Despaigne, 2010). Even though nearly 24 million people study English, approximately 21% of the population, Mexico ranks below several other Latin American nations in English language proficiency (ICEF Monitor, 2016). As stated by Wals and Jickling (as cited in Barraza, 2001), "education should be about creating possibilities, not about defining the future for our children" (p.140).

In addition, the demands of global competence made it possible for the Mexican government expanded the English language into the curriculum of public schooling (Romero, Sayer & Irigoyen, 2014). In fact, since the nineties, the State Programs

started to include English as a subject in some states of Mexico, followed by the Inglés Enciclomedia program. Then, in 2009, the national English program in elementary education PNIEB took place. Later in 2015, this changed to become an English public program called PRONI (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016). Nevertheless, according to the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness (IMCO), only 5% of the population speaks and understands English (ICEF Monitor, 2016). Despite this, even when the Mexican government has implemented different programs with the purpose to teach English as a foreign language to students from basic education (pre-school, primary, and secondary levels), the results are not as was expected (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016; Romero et al., 2014).

The Mexican education system comprises two perspectives, public or private education. Therefore, there is a connection among stakeholders that influence learning the English language, for instance, the educational background; public or private sector, the English policies implemented by the Mexican government; programs to include English as a subject in elementary education, and the reality of usefulness of English in the Mexican context; employment opportunities and development of Mexican society (British Council, 2015).

As been noticed, the English language represents opportunities for students to a better professional future. Unfortunately, obstructed opportunities because of the type of education received frustrate students learning. Nonetheless, universities offer diverse chances for improving knowledge. Moreover, learners need to assume control of the condition and enhance their learning process even when circumstances are not advantageous by developing autonomous learning.

2.3 The English Language in Higher Education

The demand for international education has increased. According to Wit, Jaramillo, Gacel-Ávila, and Knight (2005, p. 6), this is due to “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas . . . across borders. Globalization affects each country differently due to a nation’s individual history, traditions, culture, and priorities”. Besides, Higher education attempts to eradicate social inequality and increase the population's prosperity (Rodríguez, Jiménez, & Beltrán, 2015; Council, 2015). Furthermore, like

Rennie, Yank, and Emanuel (as cited in Man, Weinkauff, Tsang, and Sin, 2004) claim, "publications are the major output of scientific research" (p. 811). Moreover, Clark (cited in Hernandez and Reyes, 2014) suggests research activities are associated with each discipline's influence in the educational field. Nonetheless, countries with high English proficiency have a great chance of publication in several journals of different disciplines (Man et al., 2004). Undoubtedly, research publications are the principal recognition in academics.

In Mexico, universities are found only in the largest cities of the country. As stated by Gacel-Ávila (2005, p. 240), "the system comprises public universities, technological universities, private institutions, training institutions, and other public institutions". In the latest past few years, globalization has influenced the educational sector. As shown by Despaigne (2010) in her study called *The difficulties of learning English: Perceptions and attitudes in Mexico*, she discusses the different points of view between students from a private university and a public university.

Students coming from a public university feel more attracted to learn English because of the possibility of better labor opportunities and better incomes. On the other hand, learners from a private university relate learning English with opportunities to study abroad and international job offers.

In Puebla city, The Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla addresses social responsibility with the community to assist the most disadvantaged sectors of society and encourage social progress (Community and Buap, n. d.). Nowadays, the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla offers 77 undergraduate degrees. These have received accreditation and national recognition for their quality (Academic programs, n.d.).

Moreover, the most common Certification for foreign language is commonly English instead of another language (Lengua Extranjera, n.d.). According to the annual work report in the Languages Faculty, during the period from December 2017 to December 2018 from teaching English degrees, 94 students graduate, and 125 students have been in International academic exchange (Facultad de Lenguas, n.d.).

Summarizing, the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla has been adapted to the current time and demands of society. Facultad de Lenguas incorporates and covers

the student's needs and attends the sectors of future professional development such as certification and research publications.

Finally, the role of the English language in Higher education is crucial for understanding this research because it provides an approach to the relationship between the learner and his process to acquire the target language. relationship between the learner and the process of acquiring the target language.

2.4 The learning process of the English language

Over time, language learning theories have emerged to satisfy social needs. In language learning, Rincón (2013) affirms the implementation of several methods and techniques performed globally. From Skinner's approach, imitation and reinforcement conducting passive and receptive students. On the one hand, Piaget's cognitive principles specify the four stages of learning that each learner has to pass through. On the other hand, Vygotsky's postulates emphasize the significance of interaction and communication in language learning (García, 2010). Then, culture and learners' backgrounds have a significant influence on learning processes (Austin, Orcutt, & Rosso, 2001).

Learning strategies focus on the mental process when learning occurs. It seems unthinkable to observe but, it can be put into practice from learner to learner (Zare, 2012). Moreover, as Hernández (cited in Ramirez-Romero & Pamplón, 2012) states, the management of learning strategies enhances language proficiency and maintains reciprocity with students' learning styles.

In addition, the usage of methods influences the learning process improving learners' performance and knowledge in the target language. At this point, García (2010) outlines that language learning concerns autonomy and self-awareness. Therefore, instructional support serves as a basement for continuous learning in and outside the classroom.

Another important factor is learning styles that play a significant role in the learning process of a student. In this case, David Kolb's theory describes how learners can solve problems by applying new knowledge from their personal experiences into familiar learning environments (Olivos, Santos, Martín, Cañas, Gómez-Lázaro, Maya, 2016). The cycle bases on four aspects of students' experiences, and they are the following.

The first one represents existing experience, which refers to a feeling. The second, reflective observation that implies observing and watching. The third, abstract conceptualization (thinking), and the fourth, active experimentation that is about doing (McLeod, 2017; Olivos et al., 2001). As been seen, the combination of two aspects suggests the style of learning: diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating (see figure 1).

After all, the versatility of strategies can prolong both learning and academic purposes. Indeed, their implementation allows students to accomplish effective learning and go forward through the four stages to maximize knowledge (McLeod, 2017).

Kolb's learning styles and experiential learning cycle.

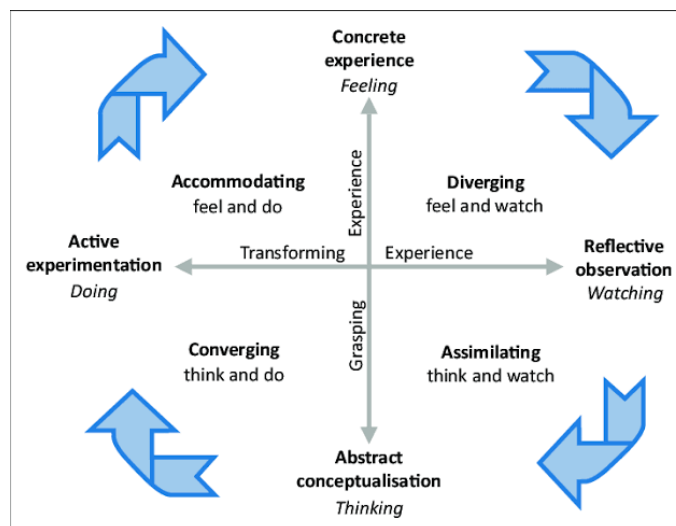


Figure 1. Kolb's learning styles and experiential learning cycle. Adapted from *Simply Psychology* (2017).

In Kolb's learning cycle, learning is a process that repeats constantly. Namely, the learner is responsible for how long to prolong his learning process on a specific topic. Then, learners need to be aware of their learning style and how this affects their learning process. Besides, it is indispensable to recognize and recall, step by step, the stages of the learning process; in other words, these are some characteristics of autonomous learning.

2.5 Autonomous learning

In education and language learning, the concept of autonomy brings into the world considerable literature existing. In general terms, the word autonomy refers to "the ability to make your own decisions without being controlled by anyone else" (Diccionario Cambridge, 2019, p. 46). In the educational field, autonomy has put learners at the center of learning foreign languages. According to Holec (as cited in Paiva & Braga, 2008), this concept points to "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p. 2). Besides, Van Lier and Benson (as cited in Jilani & Yasmin, 2016) state, autonomy involves two fundamental aspects, personal and social. In other words, a learner should manage his learning process and have the ability to control diverse situations beyond formal education.

Bandura (as cited in Correa-Pérez & Sanhueza-Jara, 2019) claims autonomous learning promotes cognitive processes that empower students to respond to diverse activities by their actions and according to social contexts. For, Joshi (2011) says it is a complex socio-cognitive system that manifests itself in different degrees of independence and control of the learning process. Undoubtedly, an autonomous learner is aware of the series of actions taken by himself.

Additionally, Benson and Voller (as cited in Frodden & Cardona, 2001, p. 3) present five different situations in which autonomy occurs.

- a. for situations in which learners study entirely on their own;
- b. for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning;
- c. for an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education;
- d. for the exercise of learner's responsibility for their own learning;
- e. for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

As can be seen, autonomous learning is an individual ability that enhances decision-making and self-regulation to manage the acquired knowledge and establish the direction needed to improve their learning process. Notwithstanding the promotion of autonomous learning in education, the principal challenge deals with scholars becoming it.

Currently, learners can modify and transform their lives by using various ways and modes. That is why the classroom is the most common context where learning occurs involving different elements. Nonetheless, learners must be aware of being autonomous beyond the institution as well as inside the class.

For the present study and based on the evidence above, the definition of autonomous learning will consider experts opinions from Little, Freire, Sionis, Benson, and Voller (in Joshi, 2011), Van Lier and Benson (in Jilani & Yasmin, 2016), and Benson and Voller (in Frodden & Cardona, 2001). This definition will support the investigation by delimiting its characteristics in the field of learning languages.

Thus, autonomous learning refers to a set of abilities learned because of guidance. It is the ability to enrich knowledge as much as a learner regulates it. Likewise, it refers to the ability to conduct the learning process. Namely, identifying learning needs, establishing learning objectives, creating and redoing situations for learning, self-regulating, and self-assessment outcomes. It involves the ability to transfer knowledge into diverse contexts and take control of learning beyond formal education. Autonomous learning concerns developing a variety of skills to manage the learning process. However, to become that kind of learner requires guidance.

As mentioned above, learning strategies play a significant role when conducting the learning process. That is why applying strategies require guidance, and learners need to be aware of how different learning strategies can affect their learning process.

2.6 Strategies to promote learning autonomy

In the seventies, cognitivism increased the interest in student language learning. Then learning strategies were recognized as a basement of continuous learning (Zare, 2012). Since then, multiple definitions of language learning strategies have emerged. To illustrate, Wenden and Rubin (as cited in Zare, 2012) described learning strategies as “any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information” (p. 163). Similarly, Chamot (as cited in Gokgoz-Kurt, 2008) defines strategies as “techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions that students take to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and

content area information” (p. 26). Then, the sequential actions facilitate the maintenance of new information, recovery of it, and the appliance of the knowledge.

Furthermore, Oxford (as cited in Zare, 2012) defines language learning strategies as “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (p. 164). Griffiths (as cited in Samperio, 2019, p. 76) claims strategies as “activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their language learning.” Hence, learners consciously decide the procedures according to their learning needs to satisfy their learning style.

Language learning strategies allow learners to regulate and process information. These tools facilitate the retention, recall, and implementation of new knowledge in different contexts (Zare, 2012). It is essential to create awareness of the selection and practice of distinct strategies to promote autonomy during the learning process because the usage of learning strategies differs from learner to learner since actions must be conscious according to their necessities (Samperio, 2019).

According to Oxford, language learning strategies (as cited in Zare, 2012) are classified into two principal categories, direct and indirect, subdivided into three grades (see table 1).

Oxford’s language learning strategies classification.

Direct strategies	Indirect strategies
Involve the mental process of the new language	Provide indirect support for language learning by employing different strategies such as focusing, arranging, evaluating, seeking opportunities, and lowering anxiety (Oxford,1990)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Memory</i> stores new information for retrieving it when it is necessary consisting of: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Metacognitive</i> enable learners to control their own cognition. For instance,

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Creating mental linkages B. Applying images and sounds C. Reviewing well D. Employing action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. overviewing and linking with material already known B. paying attention, delaying speech production, organizing C. setting goals and objectives D. planning for a language task and looking for practice opportunities, E. self-monitoring and self-evaluating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cognitive</i> involves conscious ways of handling the target language considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Practicing B. Receiving and sending messages C. Analyzing and reasoning D. Creating a structure for input and output 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Affective</i> supports students to manage their emotions, motivation, and attitudes associated with learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. lowering anxiety B. encouraging oneself C. taking the emotional temperature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Compensation</i> strategies enable learners to use the language either in speaking or writing despite knowledge gaps. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Guessing intelligently B. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Social</i> strategies facilitate language learning through interactions with others. <p>That means language is a social behaviour, and learning involves other people.</p>

Table 1. Oxford's language learning strategies classification, adapted from Zare (2012, pp. 165-166).

Finally, as Parra (2016) outlines, culture and implementation of modern teaching and learning strategies are fundamental at the moment to be applied.

Therefore, the conscious selection of tactics could be the discrepancy between accomplishing the objectives or struggling to achieve them. More importantly, as Oxford (2003) points out, the usefulness of a tactic is determined by three factors.

In the first place, its relation with the Target language. Second, its effectiveness at the moment to employ it and relating to other procedures, and third, the student's awareness to select a strategy according to a learning style and intentions.

In summary, usage of strategies involves tactics for learning a target language, and it also considers abilities to face affective emotions and attitudes. In this sense, it requires learners' active participation during the learning process. Similarly, learners' preferences, learning styles, and motivations are fundamental aspects when selecting strategies. As mentioned earlier, autonomy refers to a set of skills acquired to prolong learning, and in that case, learners need to behave in a certain form to become autonomous learners.

2.7 Characteristics of an autonomous learner

Benson's (as cited in Picón, 2012) perspective of autonomy deals with three dimensions: technical, psychological, and political. Technical dimension refers to the use of techniques and strategies that allow students to become the captain of their learning process. Then, the psychological dimension deals with students' features to develop responsibility, critical thinking, and management over the learning process. Finally, the political one describes the relation between teacher and student inside the classroom that is why the level of teachers' control during class could affect learners' decisions.

Likewise, Nunan (2013) claims, students need guidance to move from dependence to autonomy because they should engage during class. That is, participation and communication between students and teachers should be mutual.

Besides, the learning process should be empathized on what to learn and how students learn. Assistance learners identifying their learning style and employment of learning strategies allowing them to create their own learning goals result fundamental. Finally, Nunan suggests that letting students choose can improve their decision-making ability.

As Sinclair (in Llaven-Nucamendi 2014, p. 55) exposes, autonomy has different degrees linked “to a wide range of variables, such as affective factors (e.g. mood), environment (e.g. noise, temperature), physiological factors (e.g. tiredness, hunger), motivation (e.g. attitude towards the task, the subject matter, the teacher, materials, co-learners) and so on”.

Benson (in Picón, 2012, p. 148) states that autonomy in language learning can “refer more to a certain kind of relationship between the student and the learning process”. Likewise, Benson and Voller (as cited in Froddeb & Cardona, 2001) explain autonomy purposes in language education. They enlist it as follows: when learners do not receive the guidance, they study for their own when self-directed learning is done by applying a set of skills, for situations when learners take responsibility for their learning, or circumstances when learners decide the course of their learning.

Thereby, for the present paper, the definition of an autonomous learner will consider Benson’s (as cited in Picón, 2012) dimensions, Nunan’s (2013) perspective, and Benson and Voller’s (in Frodden & Cardona, 2001) opinions.

Autonomous learning let students

- manage their own learning needs and create their learning goals
- reflect on their strategies in the learning process
- identify their learning style and select content and resources
- create and generate their tasks and materials
- work individually or collaboratively
- evaluate outcomes and progress.

In conclusion, autonomous learners develop the ability to adapt their competencies into particular social contexts having in mind their learning style. Working by themselves or with peers enhances their understanding; besides, it supports learning strategies usage. Furthermore, autonomous learning deals with self-regulation to determine their own learning needs and establish a plan to reach learning objectives by regulating and evaluating their process.

As can be seen, autonomous learners monitor their learning process. They evaluate their outcomes and establish new reachable objectives. However, both teachers and

students should assess the process of learning. On the contrary to traditional evaluation, autonomous learning involves learners at the moment of judge the level of learning accomplishments.

2.8 How to evaluate autonomous learning in the English learning process

According to Genesee and Upshur (as cited in Posada, 2006), an appropriate definition of evaluation is to assess from the constructivist approach that is more “than grading students and deciding whether they should pass or fail” (p. 55). Namely, a number does not represent how successful a learner could become.

The learning process of each student is the principal component to consider during the evaluation of autonomous learning. Thus, learners have the opportunity to give meaning to their knowledge in their effort of understanding (Jofre and Mari, 2014).

In this sense, Boud and Falchikov (as cited in Panadero and Alonso-Tapia, 2017) define self-assessment as “student activity through which it judges their own learning, specifically its achievements and its results” (p. 556). In other words, learners should reflect on the process and achieved outcomes previously established objectives. Further, Klenowski (as cited in Ross, 2006) defines self-assessment as “the evaluation or judgment of ‘the worth’ of one’s performance and the identification of one’s strengths and weaknesses to improve one’s learning outcomes” (p. 1). Learners are their guide monitoring their progress and recognizing their learning deficiency. Eventually, they will work to improve their weaknesses.

Additionally, Sanmartí (in Campo, Bonilla & Ahumada, 2010) outlines that constructive evaluation promotes student awareness when examining peer's performance. At the same time, they can recognize their mistakes and distinguish their own. Previous studies have shown the impact of self-assessment on student achievement. For example, Gardner (2000) points out assuming self-assessment is the best suitable way to evaluate autonomy because learners need continuous feedback based on what they do.

According to Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (2017), self-assessment occurs at the end of a required task and during the series of actions learners carried out. Indeed, students

make decisions and modify the process because they monitor the steps to accomplish the objective.

In summary, self-assessment requires judging the own knowledge and learners' honesty regarding the level of accomplishments. Moreover, the main point towards self-evaluation deals with learners being aware of the whole process when learning a topic. Considering all information presented above, the connection between autonomous learning and the English learning process leads to long-term and continuous learning.

2.9 Autonomous learning in the English learning process

In foreign language education, Little (as cited in Herrera, 2016) expresses that learner autonomy has transformed old practices in the language classroom because nowadays, learners are at the center of learning. To illustrate this, Freire, Gremmo, and Riley (as cited in Llaven-Nucamendi, 2014) identified some historical events experienced due to the idea of autonomy.

Nowadays, the role of technology has raised the impact of continuous learning. In the philosophical sense, Knapper and Cropley (2000) state lifelong learning as “a set of goals for education, a set of procedures for realizing these goals, a set of values” (p. 8). This philosophy midpoints that it is never too late for learning.

Due to this, learning is a continuous process achieved through the lifespan of an individual. Then, lifelong learning impacts a variety of environments in and outside formal education, for instance, personal, civic, and social purposes and employment.

In that sense, autonomous learning allows learners to manage the form they learn. As stated above, autonomy demands guidance. This supervision enhances learners to identify their learning style, essential to recognize the learning cycle.

Besides, promoting the practice of learning strategies improves learners' ability to monitor the knowledge acquired. It allows students to reflect on their mental process when dealing with new information received.

Moreover, being familiarized with the autonomous learner characteristics support teachers and students when monitoring the learning process. Finally, instructional leadership helps as a foundation for continuous learning beyond formal education.

2.10 Stages of achieving autonomous learning

Certainly, accomplishing autonomy in learning requires pursuing determined steps and identifying stages needed to consider autonomous learners. The student community concedes teachers as the principal provider of commitment to the progress of their learning. Thus, if they do not receive a continued examination, learners tend to do the tasks at the end; however, this idea has to change (Llaven-Nucamendi, 2014).

Existing literature establishes the relevance of the implementation of cognitive strategies during the learning process. O'Malley and Chamot (as cited in Ajideh, 2009) describe the strategy as the steps a learner takes to accomplish their goals.

In short, the employment of diverse cognitive strategies can facilitate understanding and comprehension for students; on the contrary, to those who are less aware of the advantages of using them. Then, learners skilled in the metacognitive process are conscious of the method followed to comprehend new concepts (García, 2010). Similarly, the concept of metacognition relates to reflecting on the self-thinking process and the way someone learns. This ability is characterized by self-regulation and awareness because students can manage their learning process (Cervantes, 2019). In parallel, Flavell (as cited in Ajideh, 2009, p. 165) points out that “metacognition is deliberate, planned, intentional, goal-directed and future-oriented mental processing that can be used to accomplish cognitive tasks”. Indeed, metacognitive skills empower learners to plan and guide their learning process to solve problems effectively because they are conscious of the whole autonomous learning process.

Equally valuable are metacognitive strategies as linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural aspects in learning a foreign language. Consequently, the cognitive process in teaching a foreign language enhances learners increase autonomy (Cervantes, 2019).

The following abilities are worthy for students: to determine objectives, identify what strategies are better to improve knowledge and how to reach goals allow learners to judge the suitability of strategies. At this point, learners are critical thinkers.

Tim van Gelder (as cited in Torres, 2009) refers to critical thinking as “The art of being right” (p. 30). The term involves taking charge of our minds, which refers to the mental process, employed strategies, decision-making, and problem-solving to learn new concepts.

On the whole, Benson (as cited in Llaven-Nucamendi, 2014) concludes that students who desire to become teachers are more autonomous and go beyond the course requirements looking for additional information. At this point, metacognition has a significant role in the learning process of a foreign language (Cervantes, 2019) since it allows them to pace learning, referring to the self-control of the learning process involving the planning of cognitive activities, self-management of an intellectual process, and evaluation of results.

As been seen, this chapter defined the main concepts such as learning process, autonomous learning, and learning strategies. In addition, each was described based on previous investigations from experts' opinions for a better understanding of the connection between autonomous learning and the learning process.

Furthermore, the correlation among the enlisted definitions offers a base for this research paper.

The next chapter describes the methodology.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the overall design of the study. It describes the subjects, the instrument applied along the data collection and data analysis procedures. The research paper was conducted below quantitative methodology to obtain the needed information about perceptions and attitudes towards autonomous learning from a group of students majoring in teaching English.

3.2 Research design

The present study was analyzed from the quantitative perspective based on the nature of the issue addressed. As Creswell (2012) claims, research approaches are plans and procedures followed by the researcher to conduct a study based on the essence of the project. On top of that, Lawrence (2013) comments that quantitative studies pretend to measure how we perceive and think about the social world. Likewise, VanderStoep and Johnston (2009) state that this approach enables researchers to analyze numerical data regardless of the phenomena studied by describing and inferring the information statistically since they support the processing of numerical data from a sample of a large population concerning a particular topic providing general knowledge about the issue addressed.

The quantitative approach focuses on examining the hypothesis of an identified problem. Thus, it analyses the most significant variables influencing an outcome (Creswell, 2012; Hernandez, 2014).

The information was measured by creating specific questions, narrow and observable purposes besides using specific instruments (Creswell, 2014; VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009).

The approach selected aims to obtain the necessary information to produce general knowledge regardless of the autonomous learning and learning process. Due to this topic has been studied by a few students, the design addresses investigating and generating valuable knowledge regarding autonomy in the learning process of undergraduates preparing to become English teachers.

Research questions intend to obtain numerical information about opinions and perceptions from the sample; similarly, numerical data will be analyzed and interpreted into statistical results.

The instrument design focused on receiving information about perceptions of autonomous learning and the learning process. Moreover, its design considers the Likert scale as a guide for documenting information. Then, the data pretends to measure opinions from participants related to the main concepts of the research. Regarding the instrument, it comprises 15 items related to the two main research questions.

3.3 Subjects

In the present study, there was a sample of 80 subjects from the Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés, who were at the second year of their studies. At this point, subjects have taken a serie of courses related to teaching such as Sistema educativo mexicano y políticas lingüísticas, Teorías y procesos del aprendizaje, Observación en al aula and Metodología enseñanza del inglés I.

The study took place when they had at least five subjects, including two related to teaching. They were Metodología enseñanza del inglés II and Taller de Materiales Tradicionales y Digitales, being the last course part of the sample..

This subject attempts to guide and provide students with the necessary knowledge to strengthen themselves in the professional field and mainly in designing digital and physical materials as a visual aid for their classes. Thus, students develop abilities to create, use and adjust learning materials concerning learners' necessities.

Furthermore, students receive instruction to use technologies of education and communication as well as technologies for learning and knowledge to develop techno-pedagogical material for on-site sessions as well as virtual ones so that they could be able to implement various teaching materials for children, teenagers, adults, or even elderly at different contexts and levels.

It is worth mentioning the majority of the sample was female gender. Only a few males participated in the survey (12) since most of the community were women.

3.4 Instrument

The instrument carried out in this research was a questionnaire, which includes two sections. The first part highlights demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and semester. The second section of the instrument evaluated the variables stated in the research problem.

The first variable to analyze was autonomous learning. It is crucial to mention that it defines an ability to take responsibility for independent decision-making and self-regulation of the learning process to keep prolonging it (Little, Freire, Sionis, Benson, and Voller, as cited in Joshi, 2011).

The objective to measure this variable through the students' perceptions was to characterize their opinions towards autonomous learning. In this case, students responded to ten items, indicating the level of agreement to each statement (strongly agree 5, and strongly disagree 1).

Besides, it was necessary to identify the influence of autonomous learning on the learning process from their perceptions, too. At this stage, students responded to five items by indicating the level of agreement again.

As mentioned, the instrument was designed based on the work of the psychologist Rensis Likert. It was so because as Hernández (2014, p. 238) states, this type of scale is considered "one of the most helpful methods to measure attitudes consisting of a series of items designed to rate opinions related to a particular topic" since it attempts to analyze reactions.

Lastly, as Likert (1932, p.15) confirmed "attitude scale classification would be more suitable, assigning values from 1 to 5 levels". Consequently, the designed instrument follows a scale of 5 ranges. It measures students' opinions, which lets them select the best option according to their perceptions (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, Pal, 2015, p. 398). Nevertheless, McLeod (2019) comments that people interviewed tend to incline to social desirability resulting in less objective.

Regarding its validity, Joshi et al., (2015) state that it depends on the context and understanding while answering it.

In a general view, the instrument to gather information regarding autonomous learning in the learning process from LEI students consisted of 15 closed-ended items divided

into two sections using a Likert scale of agreement. Then, participants evaluate each item and select the best option that fixes their opinion. The first section consists of 10 statements to assess perceptions of the autonomous learning implications. The second segment refers to the influence of autonomous learning on the learning process. It is essential to point out that the development of the instrument took five steps. Firstly, it was required to establish the critical variables to produce relevant information and obtain data for this investigation and further ones. Secondly, it was indispensable to review previous research to adopt or adapt an instrument with the features needed for this investigation. In third place, the tool considers the literature review, such as Joshi (2011). The fourth step was to pilot the instrument randomly with students from Facultad de Lenguas. Finally, it was revised and corrected according to the necessary changes, and finally, the sample answered it.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

The study took place at Facultad de Lenguas from two different groups attending *Taller de Materiales Tradicionales y Digitales* course.

The procedure for gathering information took five steps. The first one deals with selecting the sample. The criteria considered two aspects: the former deals with being enrolled in the course. The latter was related to the willingness to participate in it.

The second step was to design the instrument based on Likert scales and then, piloting it. This pilot was administered randomly to 10 students in the Facultad de Lenguas. The third step was to redesign it by making the necessary changes and adapting the final statements and categories to get their validity and reliability. The fourth step was the application of the instrument, which was face-to-face without any external inconvenience and, participants received information that all data was for academic purposes. Finally, revision of every set of copies took place to accomplish its analysis and interpretation.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

After gathering the data, the information was processed with the SPSS software and get quantitative interpretation. Besides, pie charts present the outcomes to facilitate the understanding of the results.

The interpretation followed the same structure as the instrument design. Moreover, the collected information is presented in two sections to answer the two research questions focussed on autonomous learning and the learning process, and each pie chart aims at the percentages of agreement from each asseveration from the sample.

The first section presents the students' perceptions of autonomous learning and its characteristics.

The second section tries to find out the influence of autonomous learning on students' learning process. This part identifies the usage of learning strategies at their convenience in their daily life to learn. That is why a standardized examination took place twice during the semester, one at the beginning and the second at the end, to identify the influence of autonomous learning in the results of their learning process and answer the second research question.

3.7 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter addressed the methodology followed in the study and the data collection procedures and analysis.

In the next chapter, these results will be discussed, analyzed, and interpreted.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the information obtained through the application of the instrument and the discussion of the results.

The information organized in pie charts highlights the research questions that guided the study. Thus, the results are in fifteen figures showing the percentage of the agreement to each statement.

The analysis of these results is in the subsequent paragraphs.

4.2 Research questions

The purpose of this research is to establish the advantage of being an autonomous learner in the learning process from a major in Teaching English at Facultad de Lenguas.

For this reason, questions endeavor to characterize autonomous learning from the learners' perceptions and attempt to identify how this carries out a difference in learners' development abilities by using learning strategies to pace their learning process in a flexible environment.

4.3 Answers to Research Questions

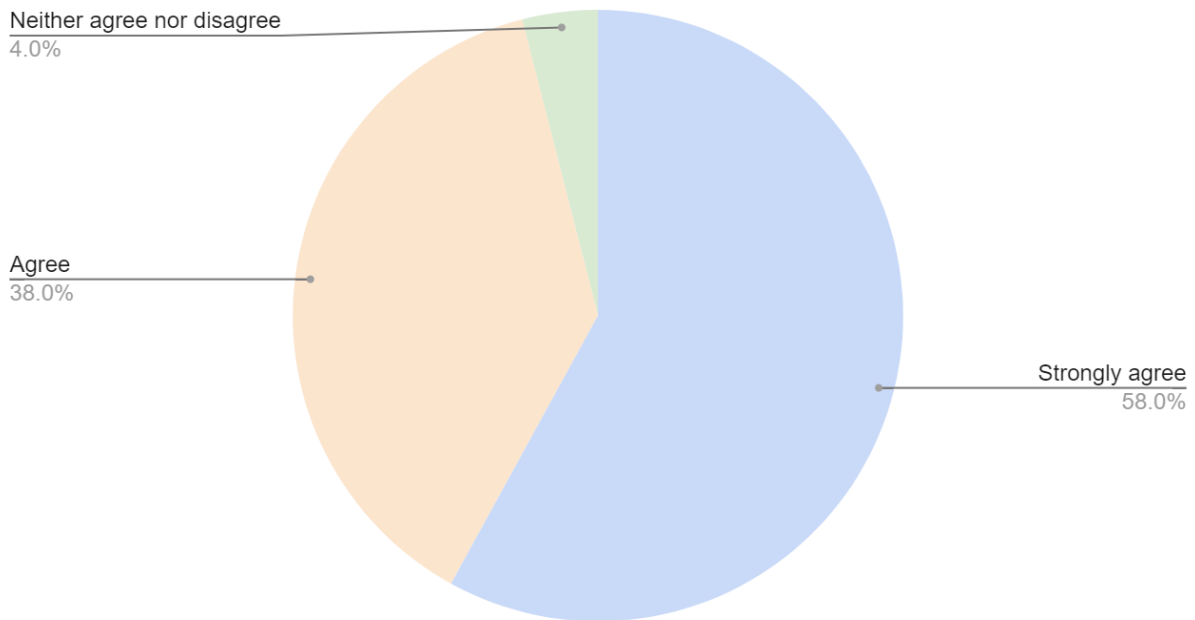
This research endeavors to answer these questions:

RQ1. What does autonomous learning mean to LEI students?

RQ2. How does autonomous learning influence the students' learning process?

4.3.1 What does autonomous learning mean to LEI students?

The first statement affirms autonomous learning means to take responsibility for own knowledge.



Graphic 1. *Autonomous learning is to take responsibility for own knowledge.*

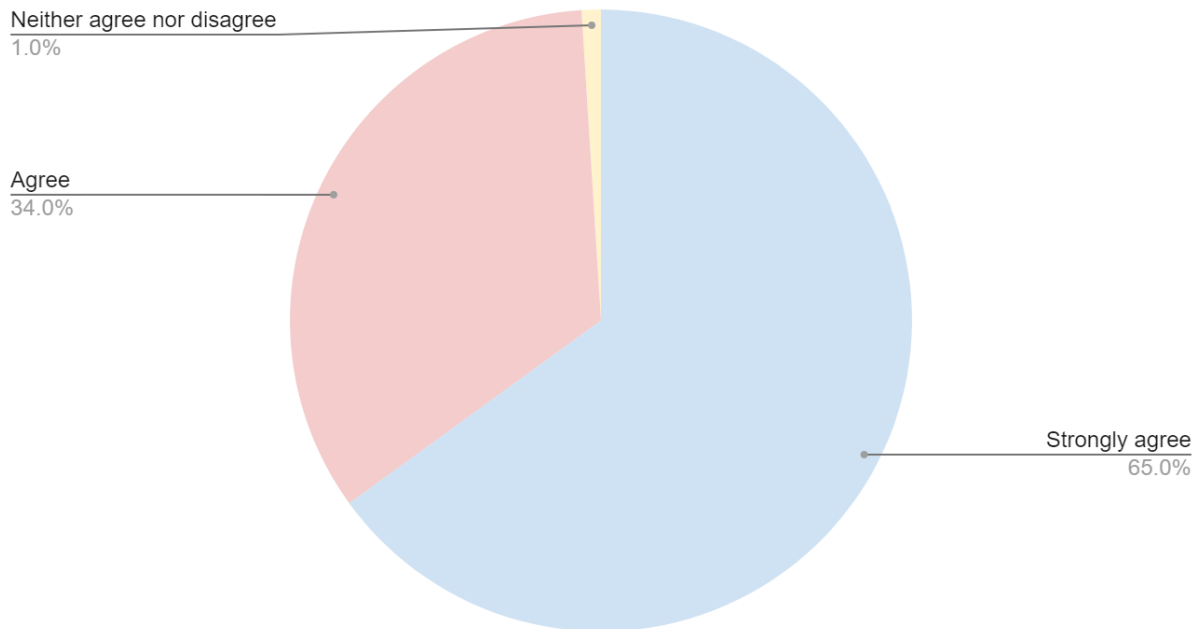
According to this, 58% of the sample strongly agrees, and 38% agrees with the idea of describing autonomous learning as taking responsibility for knowledge. However, only a minority (4%) replied neither agree nor disagree with the affirmation.

These results show that most of the students admit responsibility represents one of the features of autonomous learning. Taking responsibility and self-regulation in the learning process is one of the seven features stated by Little, Freire, Sionis, Benson, and Voller (as cited in Joshi, 2011) in the language learning field.

It seems fundamental to increase the awareness about responsibility in the community to be in charge of regulating the learning process.

These outcomes corroborate Benson's (as cited in Picón, 2012) opinions concerning the dimensions of autonomy when he claims that the psychological aspect refers to responsible development and critical thinking, which allow learners to be the manager of their learning process.

The second item analyzed if autonomous learning involves distinguishing the series of steps taken to accomplish learning goals.



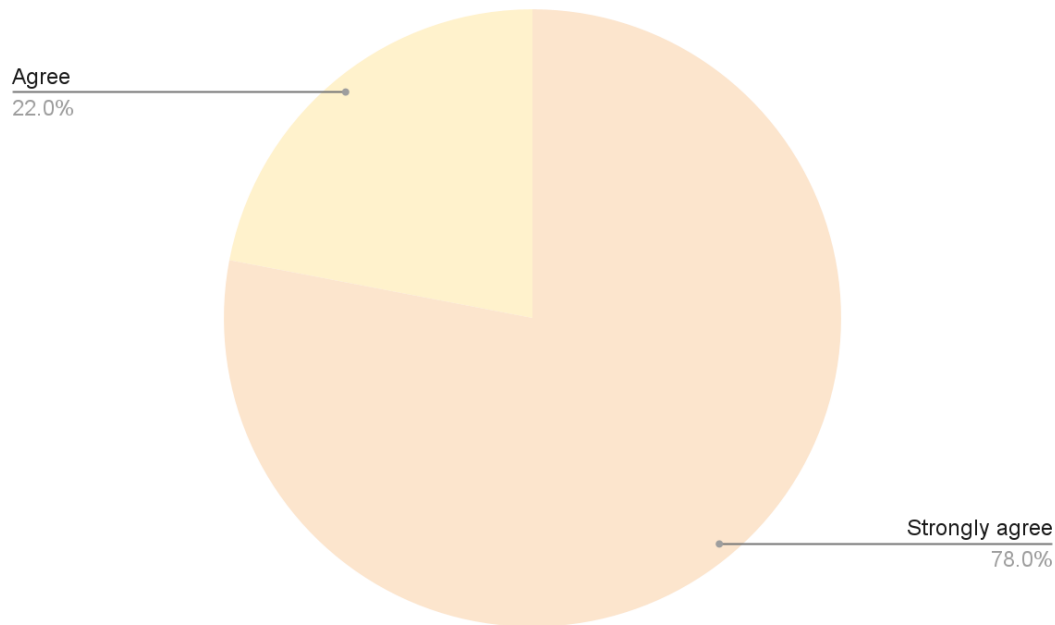
Graphic 2. *Autonomous learning means identifying the steps needed to achieve students' goals.*

65% strongly agree, and 34% agree that they need to distinguish series of steps during the learning process to accomplish learning objectives.

Nonetheless, 1% neither agrees nor disagrees by arguing that they need to work more in this modality to appreciate the possible advantages from the steps.

The majority of the participants recognize that an autonomous learner acts following a constant pathway to reach his learning goals. It confirms what Joshi (2011) and Bandura (as cited Correa-Perez & Sanhueza-Jara, 2019) mentioned previously, by affirming cognitive processes are promoted in autonomous learning since they enable to create consciousness of the step by step taken by the learners. Therefore, identifying and repeating a series of steps offer students to be more independent at the moment to achieve particular learning objectives.

Item 3 asks whether participants consider that autonomous learning means the recognition of their own learning needs.



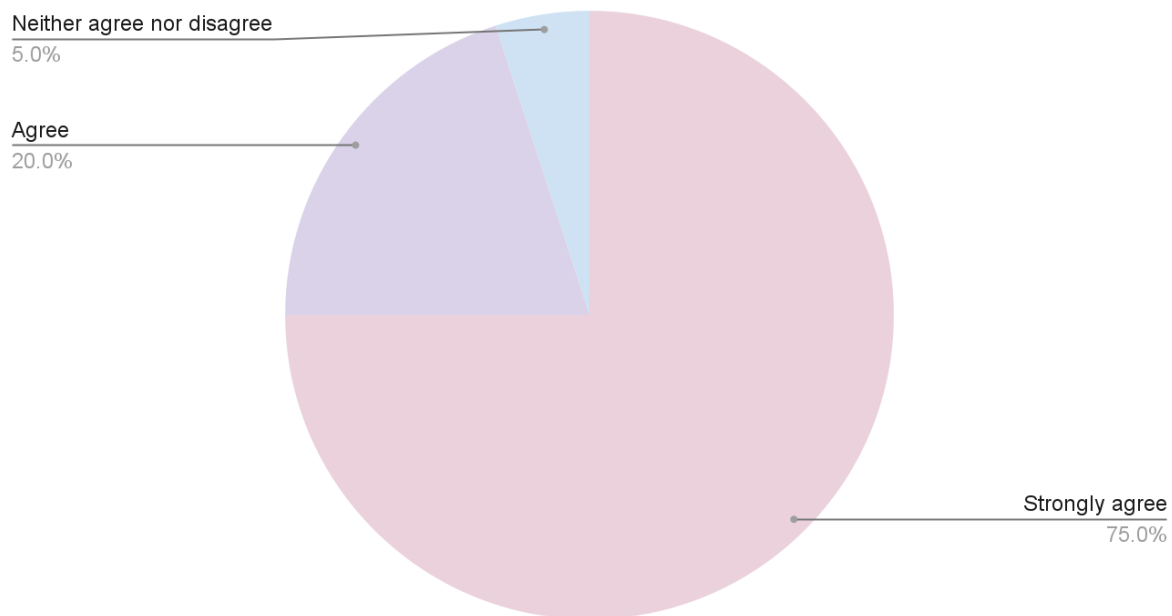
Graphic 3. *Autonomous learning is to recognize my learning needs.*

From the previous information, it is clear that most of the participants think an autonomous learner recognizes his own learning needs.

Indeed, 78% of students strongly agree, and 22% agree with this asseveration. Besides, this ratifies what Nunan (2013), Aparicio, and Benson (as cited in Frodden & Cardona, 2001) outline as a characteristic of autonomous learners.

With this in mind, participants recognize that autonomous learning implies identifying the lack of knowledge to establish their learning needs according to their learning necessities. On top of that, learners know how to conduct their learning process when recognizing their learning needs.

Statement 4 analyzes if autonomous learning is a way of empowering students to assess their outcomes.



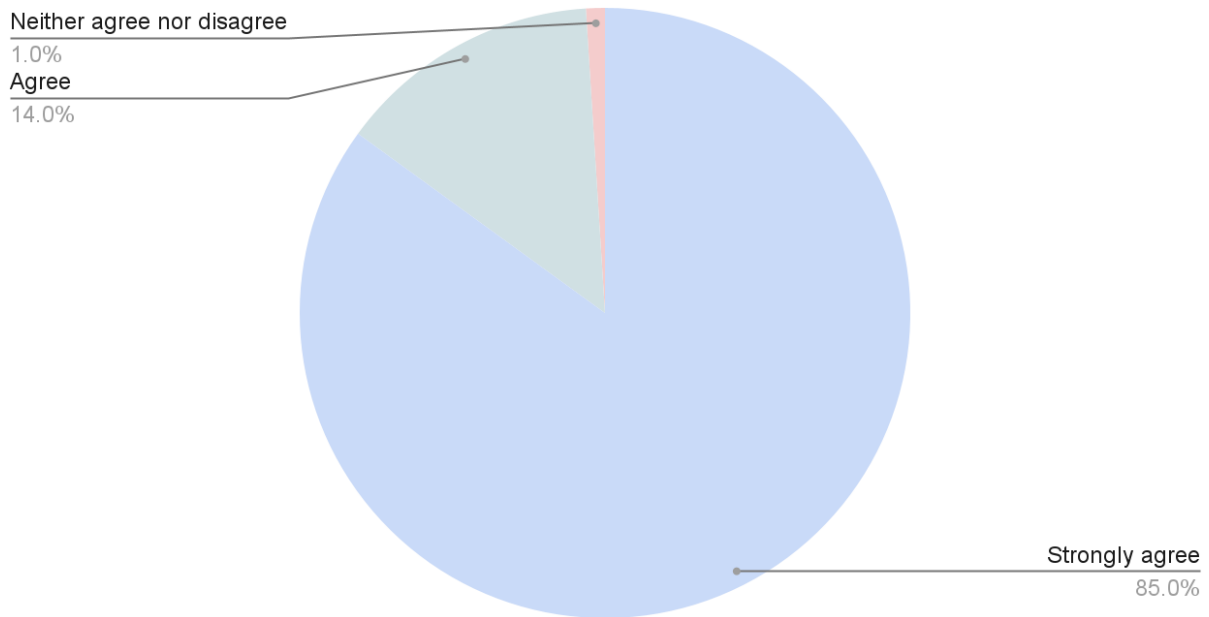
Graphic 4. *Autonomous learning allows me to assess my outcomes.*

Graphic 4 illustrates that 75% of participants strongly agree, and 20% agree that autonomous learning allows a student to assess his outcomes.

In contrast, 5% of students are undecided about this asseveration. These results show that most of the students perceive self-assessment as a feature of autonomous learning. At this point, Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (2013) provide a possible explanation regarding the previous outcome when they point out that self-assessment is perceived at the end of a task or during the actions implemented.

In this way, constructivist evaluation allows learners to get familiarized with the process by itself.

Item 5 examines if autonomous learning allows recognizing the usefulness of the gathered knowledge.



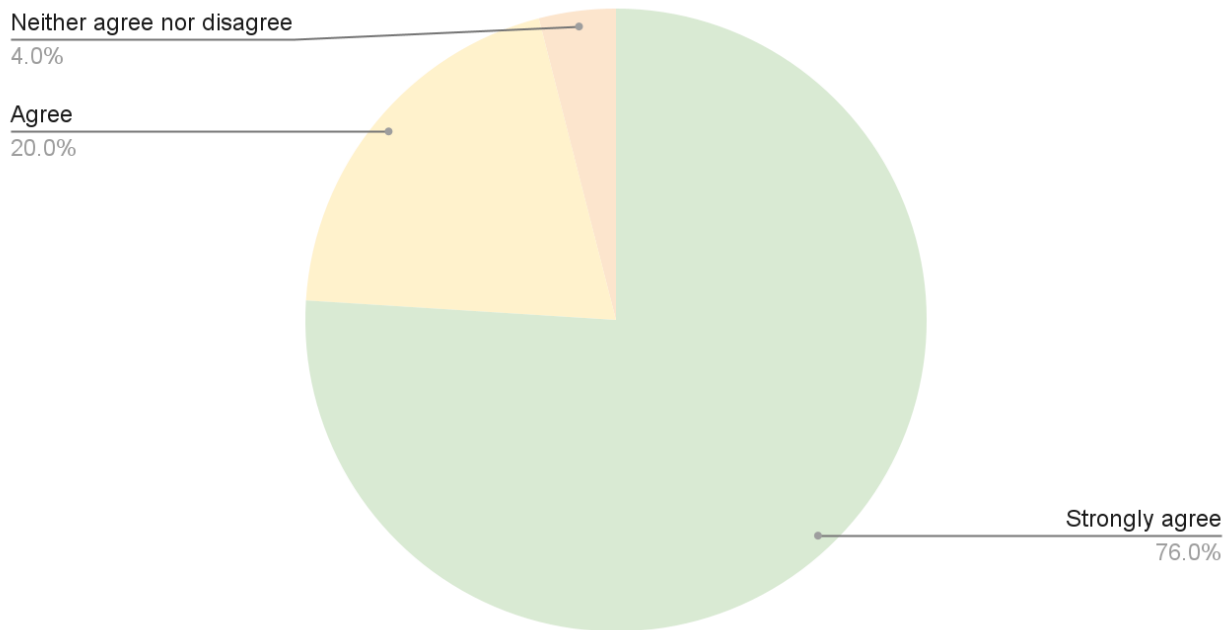
Graphic 5. *Autonomous learning implies recognizing the usefulness of the gathered knowledge.*

As been observed, 85% of students strongly agree, and 14% agree that autonomous learning means recognizing the usefulness of the acquired knowledge. According to this, only 1% neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

These results confirm what Little, Freire, Sionis, Benson, and Voller (as cited in Joshi, 2011) mention about being autonomous since it increases the ability to transfer knowledge into different contexts.

As stated by Nunan (2013), Aparicio, and Benson (as cited in Frodden & Cardona, 2001), autonomy offers learners the ability to reflect on their learning process and the use of learning strategies. In the same way, it matches Van Lier and Benson's (as cited in Jilani & Yasmin, 2016) asseveration about autonomy, which involves personal and social aspects since it is the recognition of acquired knowledge beyond formal education.

Statement 6 points out autonomous learning results as something beneficial for student-teachers preparation.



Graphic 6. *Autonomous learning is beneficial for professional development.*

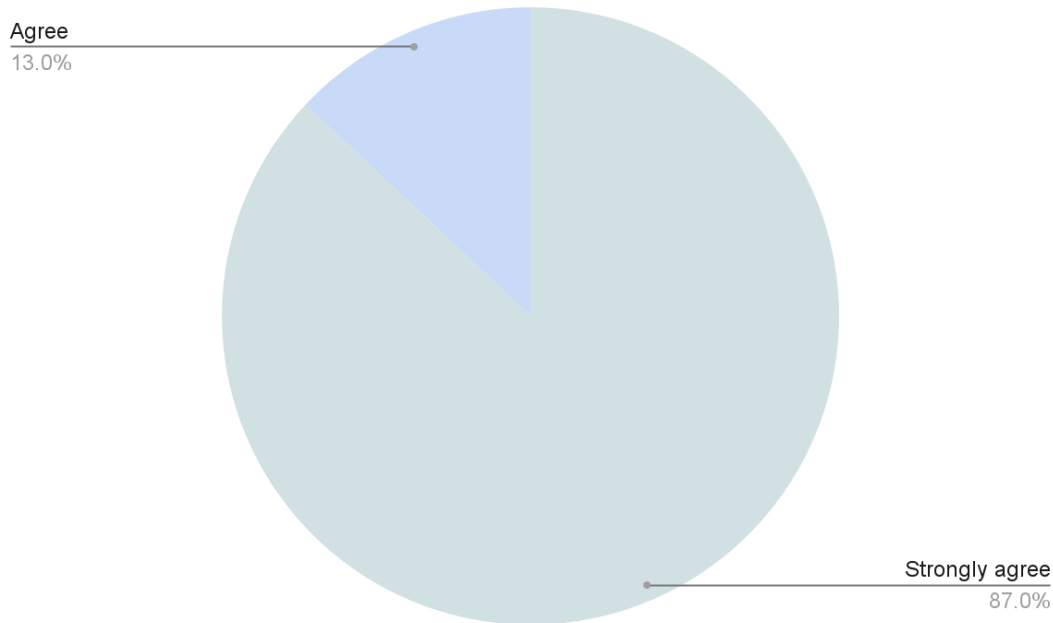
In this case, 76% of students strongly agree, and 20% only agree considering effectively autonomous learning supports for becoming an English teacher.

In contrast, only a minority (4%) answered neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

These results show that student-teachers relate autonomy as a provider of benefits for the forthcoming as professionals. Moreover, this supports what Benson (as cited in Llaven-Nucamendi, 2014) says when he outlines students the desire to become much more autonomous and go beyond the required tasks.

It also supports what Borjian (2015) and Despaigne (2010) state when they declare Mexican students' perceptions towards the English language have changed positively in the last years. For that reason, preparation in the long-term is fundamental not only as a student but as a teacher too. Therefore, this matches Hyslop-Margison and Sears's (2010) assumption related to new teachers who need to be conscious of the role of professional autonomy not only in the classroom but also with colleagues and administrative staff.

Statement 7 relates to autonomous learning as necessary to extend continuous learning.



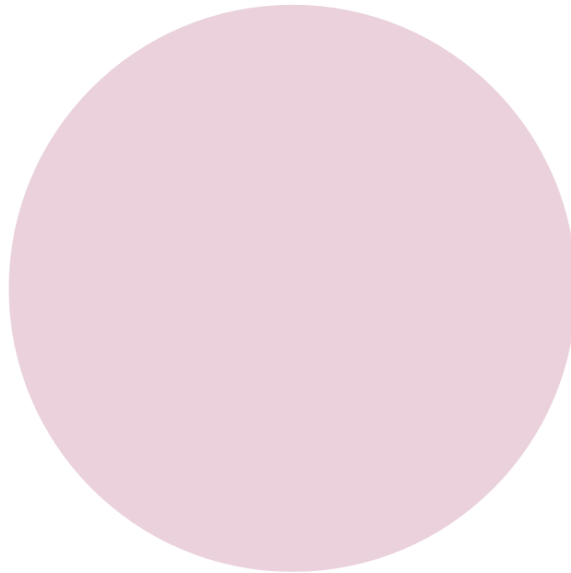
Graphic 7. *Autonomous learning is necessary to extend continuous learning.*

In graphic 7, most of the participants admit autonomous learning is primordial to get continuous learning. According to this, 87% of students strongly agree, and 13% agree with the asseveration.

These results show that students recognize the value of autonomous learning in student life and their future professional life. At this point, Garcia (2010) affirms autonomy, self-awareness, and specific strategies used by learners are the basements for continuous learning beyond formal education. Moreover, the results show how Knapper and Cropley's (2000) definition matches with students perceptions since they expressed that to be autonomous, they need a go through a list of steps to accomplish their goals and a set of values that enable them to implement that autonomy in several situations for long-term memory.

This statement states that autonomous learning allows students to increase their knowledge.

100% Strongly agree



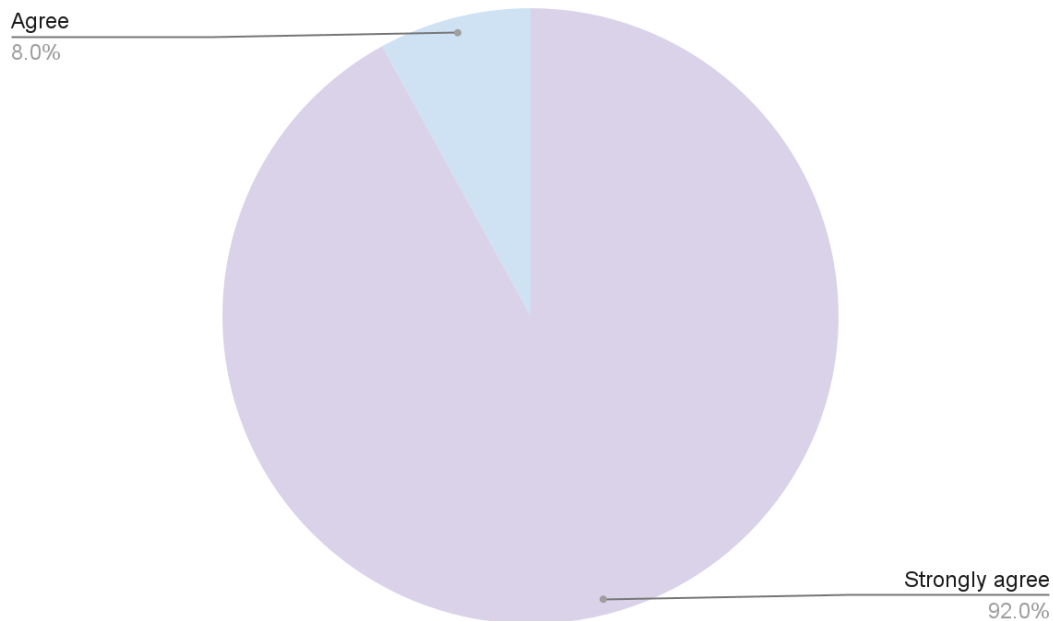
Graphic 8. *Autonomous learning lets students keep enriching their knowledge*

It is noticeable the partiality of the results due to the rating scale of the questionnaire. 100% of participants strongly agree that autonomous learning allows them to enhance their knowledge.

Undoubtedly results show that the totality of participants acknowledges the usefulness of autonomy in their lives as students, which has a strong relationship with Nunan (2013), Aparicio, and Benson (as cited in Frodden & Cardona, 2001) asseveration, especially with autonomous learner's characteristics. Indeed, they mention their improvement is because of the ability to create and generate tasks and work either individually or collaboratively.

Furthermore, participants ratified autonomous learning as a provider of continuous learning, allowing them to increase their knowledge and learn effectively as García, (2010) and Joshi (2011) suggest.

Statement 9 suggests that autonomous learning lets students establish their objectives according to their necessities.



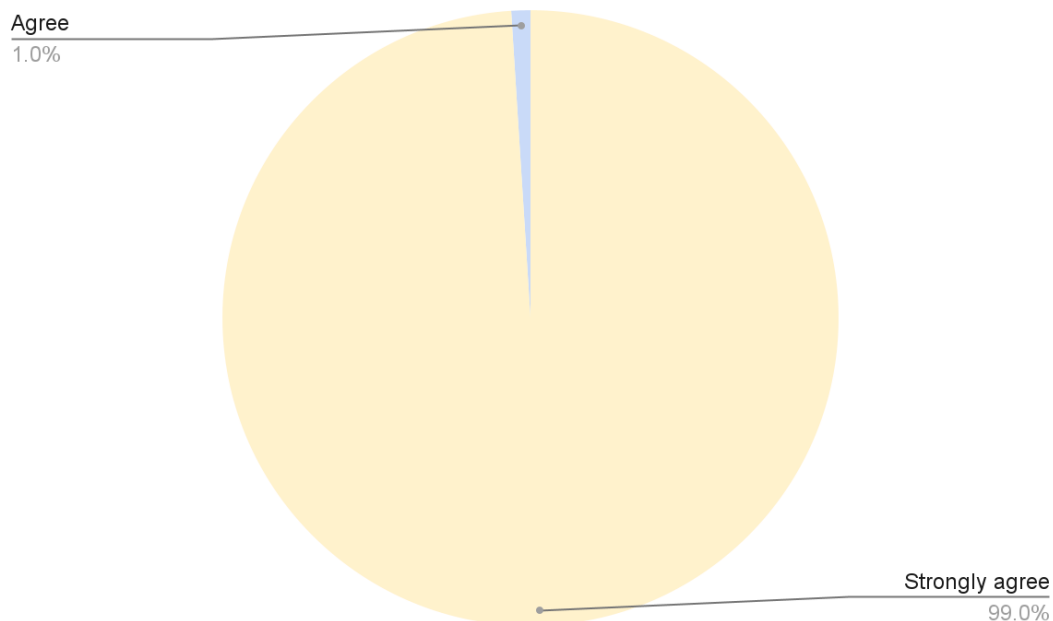
Graphic 9. *Autonomous learning lets students establish their objectives according to their necessities.*

Participants from the sample consider that being autonomous learners allows them to establish their learning objectives according to their learning necessities. Indeed, 92% of students strongly agree, and 8% agree with the affirmation.

These results relate to Little, Freire, Sionis, Benson, Voller (as cited in Joshi, 2011), Nunan (2013), Aparicio, and Benson (in Frodden & Cardona, 2001) findings, which enlist features of autonomy. In education, they suggest autonomous students can identify their learning necessities and establish objectives only if they are organized and self-directed.

Another essential feature with students' perceptions from this study is the consistency between graphics 3 and 9.

The objective of this item is to identify if autonomous learning allows students to be competent.



Graphic 10. *Autonomous learning allows students to be competent.*

It is evident partiality in this asseveration. 99% of participants strongly agree, and 1% of students agree. These results show that perceptions are highly positive when recognizing the advantages of autonomy in the learning process cycle.

It is worth mentioning that again these results match Llaven-Nucamendi's (2014) findings, which claim Mexican students need to take leadership of their learning process instead of letting teachers all responsibility. In the same way, it supports what García (2010) and Cervantes (2019) state when they explain the importance of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to become an autonomous learner.

After analyzing all the items to answer RQ1, it is evident that participants have a clear idea about autonomous learning and its implications. Besides, these results show the similarity between what participants perceive and what experts define as autonomy.

Outcomes corroborate Little, Freire, Sionis, Benson, and Voller's (as cited in Joshi, 2011) definition of autonomous learning, and the sample characterized it as a process where they must take responsibility for their learning, recognizing the helpfulness of the

acquired knowledge. In addition, the more they self-direct their learning, the more they enrich their knowledge and become an autonomous learner.

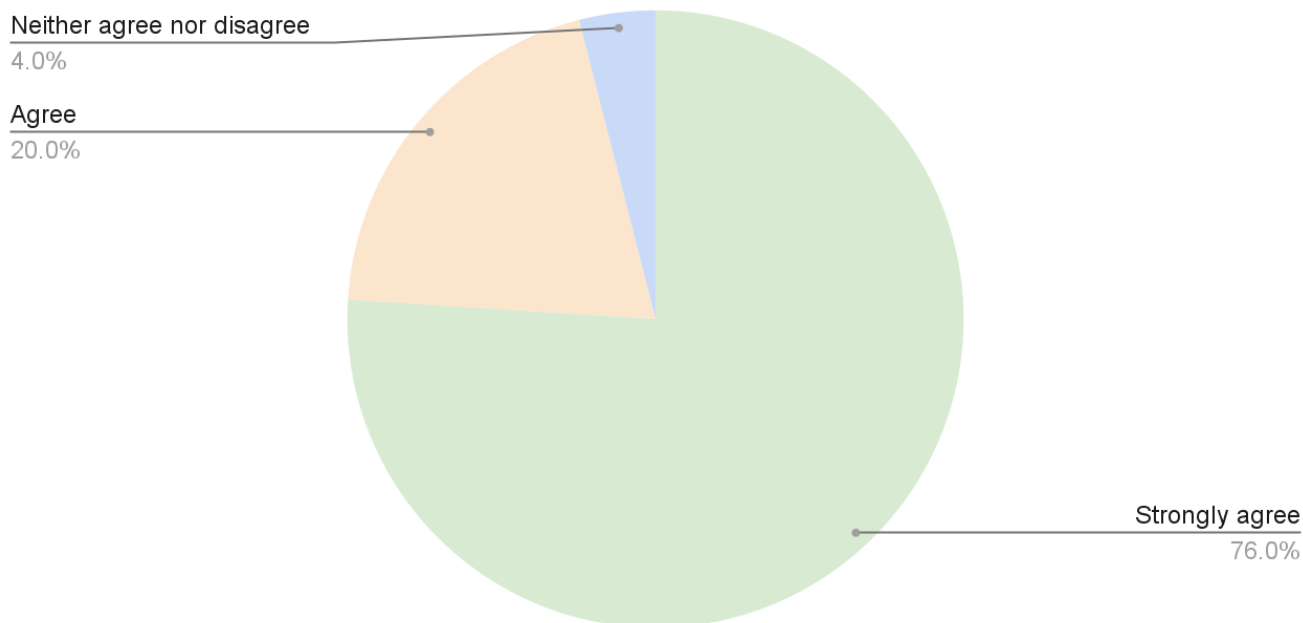
Results are equally similar to opinions from participants and experts concerning features of an autonomous learner. Nunan (2013), Aparicio, and Benson (as cited in Frodden & Cardona, 2001) said that someone applies it when he distinguishes what does and how acts as a learner, as the sample did to recall the series of steps needed to achieve goals, recognize own learning needs, establish objectives according to own necessities, and evaluate self outcomes.

The outcomes reveal that participants identify the advantages of being autonomous and perceive it as beneficial for their preparation to become English teachers by considering it as elemental support to enhance continuous learning as students and future teachers. In summary, the sample of this study shows a high positive appreciation towards autonomous learning.

However, opinions are different from actions. It is crucial to observe autonomy in student life and distinguish how autonomous learning influences their learning process. It leads to the second research question.

4.3.2 How does autonomous learning influence the students' learning process?

Statement 11 inquires if autonomous learning lets students learn English outside class.



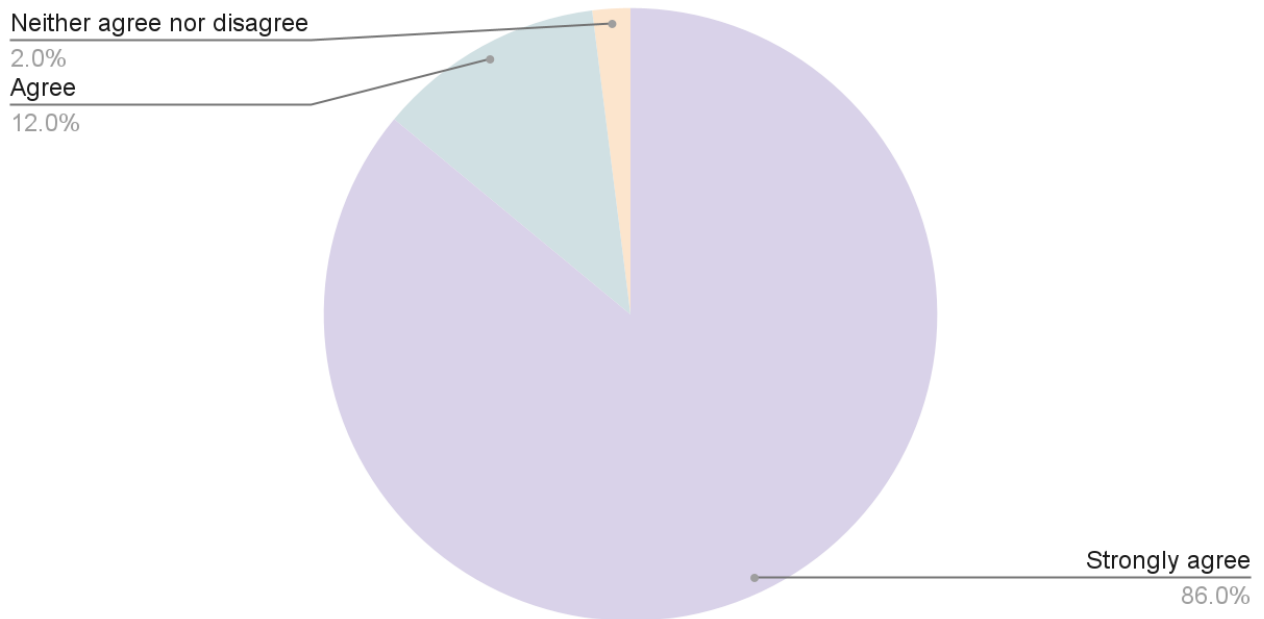
Graphic 11. *Autonomous learning lets students learn English outside class.*

Graphic 11 shows that most of the participants consider improving their learning process because of autonomous learning. It helps them discover different opportunities to learn English beyond formal education in a traditional classroom.

On the one hand, 76% of the sample strongly agree with the affirmation, and 20% agree with it, respectively.

On the other hand, 4% of the participants neither agree nor disagree with the asseveration. These findings match Benson's (as cited in Picón, 2012) assumptions about autonomy in learning, which is a relationship between the learning process and the student. That connection is fundamentally valuable when learners manage their learning process by themselves (autonomously).

Considering statement 12 that analyses if autonomous learning allows students to take advantage of the learning resources available during their learning process, the graphic below presents the results.



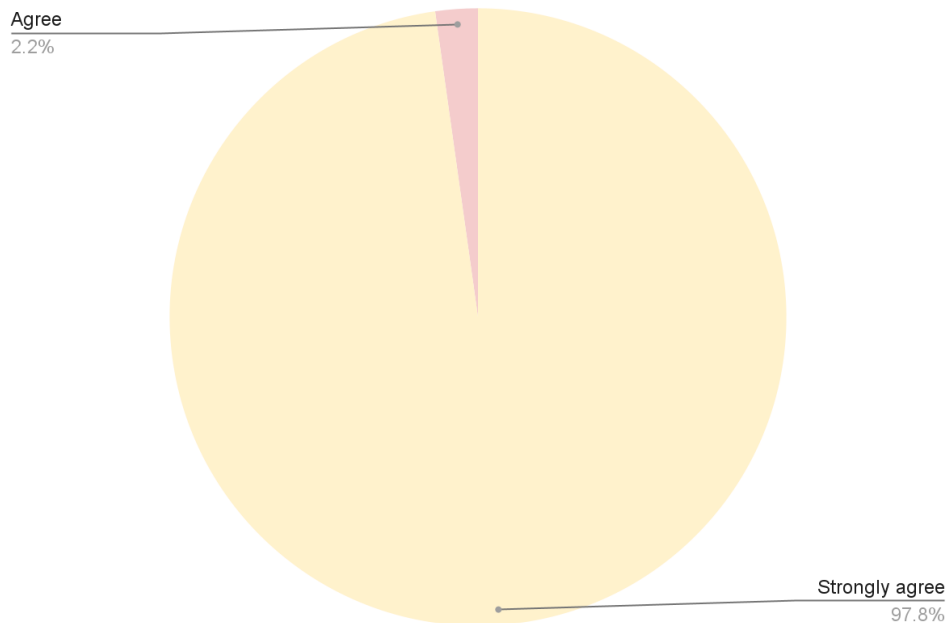
Graphic 12. *Autonomous learning allows students to take advantage of the learning resources available during their learning process*

86% of participants strongly agree, and 12% agree autonomous learning enables them to use resources available to enhance learning. Furthermore, only a minority (2%) neither agree nor disagree with this asseveration.

These results show that participants perceive autonomy as a social aspect that helps them manage their learning process beyond formal education. It also implies recognizing learning needs, setting objectives, identifying resources, applying strategies, and evaluating outcomes, the main features of autonomous learning (Nunan, 2001; Aparicio and Benson as cited in Frodden & Cardona, 2001).

In other words, students identify their ability to create and generate their tasks and material to accomplish specific learning needs.

Statement 13 inquires if the use of learning strategies lets students grasp knowledge autonomously when doing tasks.

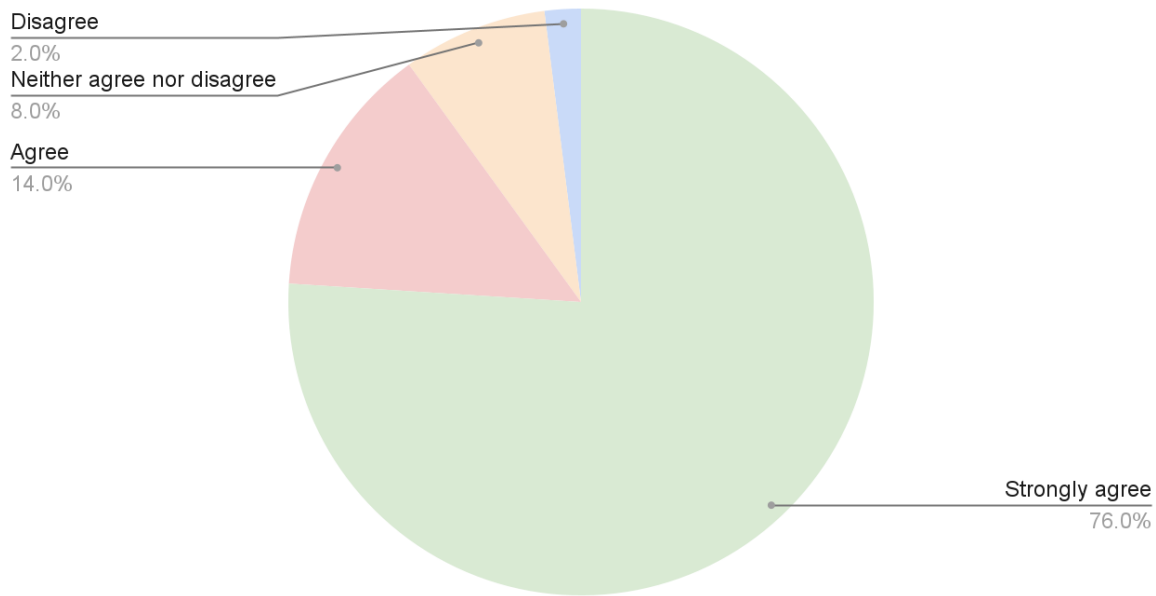


Graphic 13. The use of learning strategies lets students grasp knowledge autonomously when doing tasks.

The majority of participants could identify the strategies used during the learning process. Indeed, only a minority (2%) did not mention any. On the one hand, 12% of participants specified cooperative and self-directing strategy, comprehension strategy, explanation strategy, and thinking strategy. On the other hand, 86% of participants mentioned researching and communication strategies as the main ones to develop autonomous learning. These results show that participants are conscious of what learning strategies to employ when learning occurs that match Oxford's classification (as cited in Zare, 2012).

The answers from the sample indicate they employ direct strategies when creating mental connections and practicing receptive and productive skills of the target language. In the same way, they also applied indirect ones to identify the learning process cycle, organize and manage it while interacting with a community.

Statement 14 deals with inquiring if the pacing is suitable to be an autonomous learner.



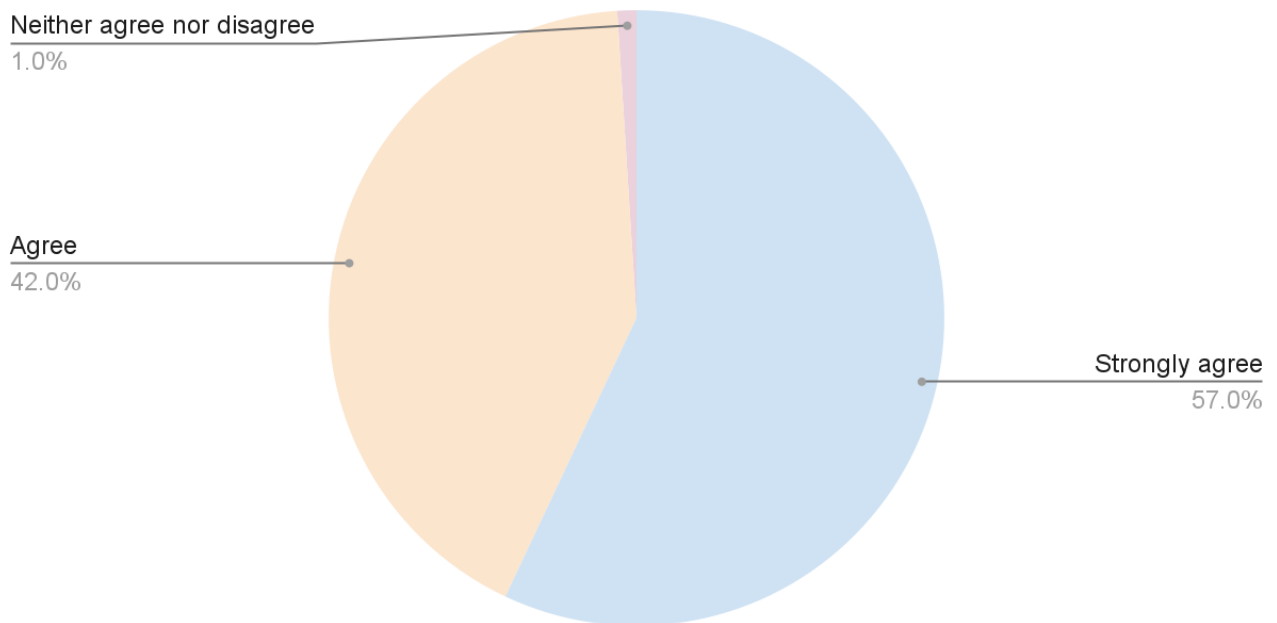
Graphic 14. *Being an autonomous learner contributes to my learning process in the long term when I pace it.*

Graphic 14 demonstrates that 76% of participants strongly agree, and 14% agree to the affirmation that autonomy provides learners an ability to prolong the learning process if they pace it.

However, 8% of participants neither agree nor disagree, and there were slightly negative perceptions of 2% who disagree with the statement. This evidences Llaven-Nucamendi's (2014) findings regarding the tendency of the Mexican community to let all responsibility of learning to teachers.

Nonetheless, in the present study, a high percentage (90%) recognizes features of autonomous learning as an extended learning process in their lives out of the classroom.

The next item inquires if students learn vocabulary and can communicate when they pace their learning process in a flexible environment.



Graphic 15. *Autonomous learning helps me to learn more vocabulary and communicate suitable when I practice at my own pace.*

As can be seen, 57% of participants strongly agree, and 42% agree by considering that autonomous learning is a reinforcement to learn vocabulary and communicate properly, especially when they pace it in a flexible environment. In contrast, only 1% of participants neither agree nor disagree with this item.

These results show positive perceptions regarding autonomy in student life that according to Nunan (2013), Aparicio, and Benson (as cited in Frodden & Cardona, 2001), they aimed when working individually or collaboratively in looking for opportunities, creating and generating own tasks to satisfy their lack of knowledge. Besides, the findings are also related to Nahum (2019), Zare (2012), and Samperio's (2019) assumptions about the advantages of autonomous learning like facility of retention, recall, and use of learning strategies.

In conclusion, these items show that autonomous learning influences students' learning process by using learning strategies, pacing it in a flexible environment, and working individually or collaboratively.

However, this data is from students' perceptions, and for having a broader view of this study, a standardized test took place to corroborate the previous information.

At the beginning of the course		At the end of the course	
Score	Students	Score	Students
410	4	470	4
400	9	460	5
380	20	450	11
370	12	440	10
350	35	430	13
		420	13
		410	10
		400	14

Table 2. *Subjects' learning process results based on a standardized exam: Comparison*

Table 2 shows the outcomes after the application of the standardized exam and the progress of participants.

As can be seen, participants' perceptions correlate with students' actions. At the beginning of the semester, the sample got low grades compared to the results registered at the end of the period. The first application shows that thirteen students obtained above 400 points in the test, and only four students achieved a higher score (410). Besides, the number of students who got between 380 and 350 was highly significant, and the lowest score was 350, which is almost half of the sample (43.75%).

It means participants did not regulate their learning process since they showed a low level of independence and responsibility for their learning needs.

In contrast, results from the second application showed a significant increase in their scores. It can be appreciated that 100% of participants obtained above 400 points. However, comparing both applications, it is perceived a significant difference in scores. For instance, 10 participants registered 410 points, and 5 got 460.

These outcomes reveal what Joshi (2011) says about autonomy that involves a level of independence and management over the learning process, or Samperio's (2019) findings of affirming learning strategies must be selected consciously based on learning insufficiencies to acquire long-term memory knowledge autonomously. Consequently, when participants assume responsibility for their learning process, they also demonstrate meaningful outcomes.

After analyzing items related to research question 2, undoubtedly, all students who participated distinguish features of autonomous learning and the behavior he adopts when managing the learning process. Besides, it is relevant to recognize the learning process as a cycle, which repeats a series of actions conducted by a learner.

As can be seen, willingness and study habits play principal keys in the learning process to be autonomous. That is why Austin, Orcutt, and Rosso (2001) affirmed that culture influences the learning process. Moreover, Garcia (2010) stated that learners need instructional support to enhance self-awareness of their learning process to have the ability to manage all the aspects that this process implies as a basement for continuous learning beyond formal education.

Additionally, students have to be conscious of the predominant learning style during their learning process since this helps them go through the four stages from concrete experience to reflective observation; then, abstract conceptualization and ending with active experimentation (Kolb's cited in Olivos et al., 2001) avoiding being much more receptive to one of these phases.

Moreover, the results match what Hernández (as cited in Ramirez-Romero & Pamplón, 2012) said about the learning strategies usage, which depends on what type of learning style a student has. This use also allowed students to process and contrast previous knowledge and new information, contributing to their long-term memory. Additionally, results from the standardized test reveal Oxford's classification of learning strategies because they evidence how their application implies better results since this

classification can facilitate the selection of particular methods and a variety of self-assess formats so that students could evaluate their outcomes and reinforce knowledge (Nahum, 2019; Zare, 2012, and Samperio, 2019).

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This study took place to inquire about autonomous learning and LEI students' learning process. This chapter presents the conclusions after analyzing the data in the previous chapter.

The following sections contain a summary of the findings, the accomplishment of the aims, the study limitations, suggestions for further research, a personal reflection, and final comments.

5.2 Summary of the findings

The results derived from the study showed significant outcomes when students take part in being autonomous during their learning process. In the first place, participants have a high positive perception regarding autonomy in learning. The majority of them recognize taking responsibility as a fundamental characteristic of autonomous learning. Besides, the sample population distinguishes it promotes the learning process by monitoring learning necessities, establishing clear and reachable objectives, and assessing outcomes in a flexible environment.

Furthermore, a high percentage showed to be conscious of the usefulness of learning strategies that allow them to regulate their process. As can be appreciated, researching and communication strategies are the principal that participants consider helpful to manage and monitor their progress.

Moreover, the sample identifies cooperative, self-directing, comprehension, explanation, and thinking strategies as invaluable for their learning, especially when they need to evaluate their understanding recalling previous knowledge to complete a task. Besides, learning styles and those strategies lead students to a continuous learning process for becoming autonomous.

Lastly, findings included participants' improvement in listening, reading, writing, and speaking abilities after the second application of the standardized test. Thus, these outcomes corroborate the connection and influence between autonomous learning and the learning process.

5.3 Accomplishments of the aims

The research provides information related to the relevance of autonomous learning in LEI students' learning process. First, it shows a reciprocal connection between autonomous learning and students' learning process. The latter extends as soon as learners raise awareness of autonomy and the actions needed to manage new knowledge.

One of the most significant findings of the present paper was to corroborate the influence of autonomous learning as a provider on students' learning process by leading students' preparation, learning, and outcomes. For instance, during the language learning process, students developed the ability to face their weaknesses and make them into strengths since that high level of autonomy helped them support partners and guide themselves.

On top of that, implementing learning strategies appears to be essential to improve language abilities. As discussed in chapter 2, it is imperative for autonomy a guidance learner. Firstly, students need to recognize their learning styles and then choose learning strategies to improve weaknesses in the target language by selecting the most suitable addressing their necessities. In summary, applying the appropriate learning strategies enhances a better understanding and keeps enriching and prolonging the learning process.

As been seen, the study accomplished the established aims.

5.4 Limitations of the study

In the fulfilment of this research project, there are some limitations like the following. First, the approach of the study since it focuses on analyzing quantitative data from a limited number of participants compared with the current population of Facultad de Lenguas. Then, a possible suggestion is to complement these results with a qualitative

data to enrich the information obtained. Besides, perceptions regarding autonomy and the level of English language could provide different results if this study is replicated in a bigger sample and different levels.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

In the fulfillment of this research project, there are some limitations like the following. First, the approach of the study since it focuses on analyzing quantitative data from a limited number of participants compared with the current population of Facultad de Lenguas. Then, a possible suggestion is to complement these results with qualitative data to enrich the information obtained. Besides, perceptions regarding autonomy according to the English language level could provide different results if this study is replicated in a bigger sample.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

The researcher suggests furthering autonomous learning research. This data can lead other researchers to further study on research center on teaching experience to appreciate the role of autonomy in the professional field.

Furthermore, other research may include raising awareness of autonomous learning with a community of children and teenagers or observing how autonomy applies to other fields and subjects. For instance, courses related to teaching, linguistics, or even culture.

Due to the limitations mentioned above, it is interesting to further research focused on the qualitative perspective to provide a better understanding of this study data and considering a large number of participants to contrast findings. Another option is to apply longitudinal studies rather than transversal ones to get data about autonomy during different periods.

5.6 Personal reflection

On the whole, the research paper provided me with the experience I needed to further projects. My objective as a researcher is to encourage further researchers to approach autonomous learning from different populations' perspectives in a variety of contexts.

Personally speaking, the study makes me reflect on the significance of my position as a student and teacher. Besides, the findings make me consider the relevance of autonomy in vulnerable groups. In the same way, this topic makes me reflect on the influence of perceptions and the importance of learning styles and strategies use, especially in LEI students' professional development.

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