

Professors' and Students' Perceptions of Learner Autonomy in the University of Prizren's Department of English Language and Literature

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to investigate the perceptions of learner autonomy (LA) of 92 EFL undergraduate students and 11 professors in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Prizren. In order to reach this aim, three research questions were raised: 1) What are EFL students' perceptions regarding learner autonomy? 2) What are EFL professors' perceptions regarding learner autonomy? and 3) Is there any difference between EFL students' and professors' perceptions regarding learner autonomy? This study was conducted through the collection of quantitative data. The instruments of the current study were two questionnaires, one for students and one for professors. The findings of the study showed that students' and professors' perceptions regarding learner autonomy in the English Department do not overlap at all points. As expected, both students' and professors' perceptions of learner autonomy were generally positive. The study revealed that even though students showed a tendency to like LA in learning, they seemed unsure to take responsibility and control their learning; moreover, they considered the teacher as a central figure (giver) who is responsible for their learning. On the other hand, professors agreed to involve learners in making decisions related to their own learning. The study verified the hypothesis that there is a slight difference between students' and professors' perceptions regarding learning autonomy in the Department of English Language and Literature. To sum up, professors' and students' awareness should be raised about the importance of learner autonomy in learning and teaching.

Keywords: autonomy, learning autonomy, student perceptions, professor perceptions, higher education

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1. Introduction

Learner autonomy has been a key topic in the field of English learning and teaching since the 1860s. However, the concept of learner autonomy has evolved over the past thirty years. This 'movement' (Crabbe, 1990) has attracted scholars, teachers, policy makers, and researchers from different countries. They have approached the concept of learner autonomy from different perspectives. For some, teachers are still seen as having most responsibility in the teaching/learning process. However, contemporary teaching views embrace the idea of learners' right or freedom to manage their own learning. Not much research has been done in Kosovo regarding learner autonomy (LA) at any level of education; to be exact, there is no empirical study about learner autonomy in higher education. The concept of LA is a new trend for our educational system. Students in our schools are still being taught in traditional teaching and learning methods where teachers lecture and students learn. Kosovo has undergone several changes since the educational reforms started several years ago. However, the Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) has made great efforts to implement different projects in order to change the abovementioned teaching style and promote LA in teaching and learning English. Thus, this study aims to analyze students' and professors' perceptions regarding learner autonomy in their University.

1.1 Research questions

1. What are EFL students' perceptions regarding learner autonomy?
2. What are EFL professors' perceptions regarding learner autonomy?
3. Is there any difference between students' and professors' perceptions regarding learner autonomy?

1.2 Research hypothesis

There is a slight difference between students' and professors' perceptions regarding learner autonomy in the Department of English Language and Literature.

2. Literature review

2.1 What is learner autonomy?

There are various definitions concerning the notion of learner autonomy. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the word 'autonomy' is derived from the Greek stem *autos* "self" + *nomos* "custom, law." On the other hand, the Advanced Cambridge Dictionary defines the word 'autonomy' as the right to be independent and

govern itself. But what is the meaning of the term ‘autonomy’ in pedagogy? The term autonomy was first introduced by Holec. Holec (1981), known as the pioneer of learner autonomy, defines autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p.3). Based on his definition, various other definitions of learner autonomy have been offered by scholars, teachers, policy makers, and researchers. Benson (2001) defines LA as the capacity to take control of one’s learning. According to Joshi (2011), the term autonomy refers to one’s ability to decide the laws for oneself. Little (1991) argues the concept of learner autonomy as a high degree of freedom. Similarly, Crabbe (1993) defines learner autonomy “as the individual has the right to be free to exercise his or her own choices, in learning as in other areas, and not become a victim of choices made by social institutions” (p.443). According to Nunan (1991), the concept of autonomy in language learning is part of the communicative approach. He adds that this process will proceed most effectively if learners are allowed to develop and exercise their autonomy. For Xhaferi and Xhaferi (2018), LA is seen as a trend which involves students’ engagement in their own learning.

As has been discussed so far, scholars have failed to reach a consensus on the concept of LA. However, to wrap up, all the definitions above refer to a concept that learners have or develop the ability to take charge of their own learning process.

2.2 The teachers’ role in LA

The term teacher’s role in learner autonomy has been discussed very broadly. For example, Crabbe (1990) claims that the teacher’s role is to present, to explain, to set standards, and to assess students’ work. On the other hand, he adds that the learner’s responsibility is to seek understanding, to apply knowledge, and to meet the standards set by teachers. Little (2007) argues that learner autonomy is an interactive process in which the teacher gradually enlarges the scope of her learners’ autonomy by gradually allowing them more control of their learning.

There are some studies which discuss learners’ cultural background. For example, a study carried out by Nguyen (2012) points out that successful teachers are those who understand students’ personal and cultural background and create a supportive learning environment. This indicates that teachers should expand their expertise and involve students in their learning activity; they should change and shift their role from teacher-centered to student-centered if they want to promote learning autonomy in their schools.

Furthermore, teachers should encourage their students to reflect on and monitor their progress in learning English. Directors and colleagues should praise teachers for their efforts in promoting learner autonomy. Xhaferi and Xhaferi (2017) claim that the ultimate goal of a teacher is to prepare students for life-long learning; this can be achieved only if students are autonomous learners.

2.3 The learners’ role in LA

Little (1990) adds that students ‘accept responsibility’ for their learning, the way how they are learning, why they are learning, and the degree of their success in learning. According to Al Asmari (2013), students should be engaged in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning. He states that teachers should integrate students’ preferences into teaching. Similarly, Garrigen (1997) claims that learners should be involved in the negotiation process with their teachers and record their own learning. Moreover, Al Asmari (2013) adds that students should formulate classroom rules in order to feel a part of the community in which learning takes place. It implies that teachers should not select the learning materials without involving learners in the learning process. According to Talley (2014), teachers and students should cooperate to achieve learner autonomy inside and outside the classroom. In short, teachers should encourage students to be active participants rather than passive figures during classes.

2.4 Previous LA studies

Several previous studies have analyzed teachers’ and students’ perceptions of learner autonomy from different points of view. Arshiyani and Pishkar (2015) conducted a study on “Iranian Professors’ Perceptions of EFL University Students’ Autonomy.” They analyzed the factors that contribute to learners’ autonomy. They collected data from fifty undergraduate students and twenty-two professors from the Islamic Azad University of Bandar Abbas. The results of the study demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between teachers’ perception of learners’ autonomy and learners’ actual level of autonomy.

Farahi (2015) carried out a study titled “Teachers’ and Students’ Perceptions of Learner Autonomy in the ELT Department at Eastern Mediterranean University.” The study was conducted with 69 ELT students and 11 instructors teaching in the ELT Department at EMU. The results obtained from this study reveal that both students and teachers in the ELT Department have positive views about learner autonomy. Moreover, the results of the study showed that both ELT students and their instructors believe that students should be involved in decisions about their learning.

Another study titled “Exploring EFL Teachers’ and Students’ Perceptions of Learner Autonomy in

Egyptian Technical Schools” was conducted by Khalil and Ali (2018). They explored the perceptions of learner autonomy of 265 students and 89 EFL teachers in technical secondary schools in Egypt. The results of the study revealed that the participants have positive views about learner autonomy in language learning. However, students were neutral about their ability to choose course materials and strategies to learn English. Ultimately, this study showed that EFL teachers perceived their students as non-autonomous due to individual and institutional challenges. Similarly, a study titled “Beyond Expectations: Autonomy and the Iranian Postgraduate Students in Malaysian Public Universities” was done by Neissi and Hussein (2017). The findings revealed that the Iranian postgraduate students do practice autonomy and know how to apply positive coping strategies in their studies.

Henri, Morrell, and Scott (2017) conducted a study titled “Student Perceptions of their Autonomy at University.” They surveyed a total of 636 students’ self-perceived autonomy during two academic years. Findings showed that students do not perceive themselves as being any more autonomous as they progress through University.

Some studies on learner autonomy have shown that teachers and students are not conscious of the ‘movement’ learning autonomy. For example, a study titled “Autonomous English Learning: Teachers’ and Students’ Perceptions” was carried out by Khotimah, Widiati, Mustofa and Ubaidillah (2019). They surveyed 30 English teachers and 283 third-year secondary school students in Indonesia. The findings indicated that both teachers and students have inadequate understandings of what autonomous learning concepts are. Another research worth mentioning was conducted by Asiri and Shukri (2018). They analyzed teachers’ perspectives on learner autonomy in Saudi Arabia. The study showed that teachers believe that Saudi learners are non-autonomous. Moreover, teachers stated that they need proper training to promote learner autonomy. An interesting study titled “Autonomous Language Learning: Bangladeshi Undergraduates’ Attitudes and Perceptions” was done by Mehrin (2017). The researcher found that learners perceive autonomous learning helpful only if teachers help them. This implies that learners rely on teachers and like the spoon-feeding process.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted with a group of undergraduate students and professors in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Prizren.

3.1 Participants

The participants in this research were 92 EFL students at the Faculty of Philology, English Language and Literature Department. Beside undergraduate students, 11 professors (full and part-time) participated in this research.

3.2 EFL students

The number of undergraduate students who participated in this study was 92. The majority of participants were female, and only ten students were male. The participants belonged to different ethnic backgrounds, namely Albanian, Turkish, Bosnian, and Roma. Their ages ranged from 18-30 years.

3.3 Professors

Seven professors and four teaching assistants participated in this study. The professors’ age ranged from 25-62 and they included both men and women. Nine of the professors were non-native speakers of English, and two of them were native speakers of English.

3.4 Data collection instrument

In the present study, two different sources of data were used by the researcher: student questionnaire and professor questionnaire. To find out the perceptions of professors regarding learner autonomy in the English Language and Literature Department of the Faculty of Philology at the University of Prizren, the researcher compiled the questionnaire based on the questionnaire used by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012). There were 23 closed-items in the form of the five-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Furthermore, the researcher used the questionnaire developed by Zhang and Li (2004) to find students’ perceptions regarding learner autonomy. The questionnaire used in this study consisted of two sections. The first section covered ten closed-items in the form of the five Likert-scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree and the second section focused on nine items, each item had a set of answers designed to demonstrate their perceptions of learner autonomy.

3.5 Data collection procedures

The participants were invited via email to fill out an online questionnaire. They were notified before for this questionnaire, and it took about 15 minutes for students and professors to complete the questionnaires. Therefore,

the researcher divided the data into two categories: a) student questionnaire and b) professor questionnaire.

3.6 Data analysis

After collecting the data from students and professors, the researcher followed some further steps to analyze their questionnaires. The researcher used Microsoft Excel to provide numerical data of this present study.

4. Results

The following tables present the results that were collected from students and professors of the University of Prizren's Department of English Language and Literature. The analysis of this study was done separately based on the categories mentioned above. Therefore, the first section presents students' perceptions of learner autonomy. The second section describes professors' perceptions regarding learner autonomy.

Table 1. Students' perceptions of learning autonomy (Part I)

	Agree		Disagree		Strongly Agree		Strongly disagree		Unsure		Total	Total
1.I think I have the ability to learn English well	33	35.87 %		0.00%	53	57.61 %	3	3.26 %	3	3.26%	92	100.00 %
2. I make good use of my free time in English study	61	66.30 %	3	3.26%	19	20.65 %		0.00 %	9	9.78%	92	100.00 %
3. I preview before the class	54	58.70 %	7	7.61%	9	9.78%		0.00 %	22	23.91 %	92	100.00 %
4. I find I can finish my task in time	46	50.00 %		0.00%	34	36.96 %	2	2.17 %	10	10.87 %	92	100.00 %
5. I make self-exam with the exam papers chosen by myself	37	40.22 %	17	18.48 %	11	11.96 %	1	1.09 %	26	28.26 %	92	100.00 %
6. I attend out-class activities to practice and learn the language	36	39.13 %	11	11.96 %	24	26.09 %		0.00 %	21	22.83 %	92	100.00 %
7. During the class, I try to catch chances to take part in activities such as pair/group discussion, role-play, etc.	54	58.70 %	5	5.43%	21	22.83 %	2	2.17 %	10	10.87 %	92	100.00 %
8.I know my strengths and weaknesses in my English study	43	46.74 %	1	1.09%	39	42.39 %		1.09 %	8	8.70%	92	100.00 %
9. I choose books, exercises which suit me, neither too difficult nor too easy	49	53.26 %	5	5.43%	23	25.00 %	1	1.09 %	14	15.22 %	92	100.00 %
10. I keep a record of my study, such as keeping a diary, writing review etc.	41	44.57 %	18	19.57 %	14	15.22 %	2	2.17 %	17	18.48 %	92	100.00 %
Grand Total	454	49.35 %	67	7.28%	247	26.85 %	12	1.30 %	140	15.22 %	920	100.00 %

As table 1 shows, the vast majority of students strongly agree or agree (93.5 %) that they believe in their

ability to learn English, and only 6.6% state that they have problems. Regarding the second item, the majority of students (87%) demonstrate that they make good use of their free time in English. For the third item, 68.5 % of them state that they preview before joining their classes, and 87% of them claim that they finish their tasks in time. More than half of them (52.2%) strongly agree or agree with item 5. They make self-exam, with the exam papers chosen by themselves, and 28 % of them assert that they do not assess themselves. 65.2 % of students incline that they attend out-class activities to practice and learn the language, and 22.8 % of them are unsure.

Regarding item 7, most of students (81.5%) assert that they try to catch chances to take part in activities such as pair/group discussion, role-play, etc. Furthermore, 78.3 % of them declare that they know their strengths and weaknesses. As expected, 78.3 % of them know how to choose books, exercises which suit them, neither too difficult nor too easy. Regarding item 10 of the questionnaire, 59.8 % of the participants strongly agree or agree that they prefer to keep a record of their study by keeping a diary, writing a review, analyzing, etc.

Table 2. Students' perceptions of learning autonomy (Part II)

11. I study English here due to:	92	11,11%
C. getting a good job, help to my major	3	3,26%
D. interest of English culture, such as film, sports, music, etc.	1	1,09%
E. C and D	88	95,65%
12.I think the learner-teacher relationship is that of:	92	11,11%
A. receiver and giver	92	100,00%
13. I think my success or failure in English study is mainly due to:	92	11,11%
B. English studying environment	14	15,22%
C. studying facilities(aids)	8	8,70%
D. teachers	1	1,09%
E. myself	69	75,00%
14. Whether students should design the teaching plan together with teachers or not, my opinion is:	92	11,11%
A. strongly agree	16	17,39%
B. agree	29	31,52%
C. neutral	44	47,83%
D. oppose	3	3,26%
15.When the teacher asks questions for us to answer, I would mostly like to:	92	11,11%
A. wait for others' answers	11	11,96%
B. think and ready to answer	56	60,87%
C. look up books, dictionaries	7	7,61%
D. clarify questions with teachers	10	10,87%
E. join a pair/group discussion	8	8,70%
16.When I make mistakes in study, I'd usually like the following ones to correct them:	92	11,11%
B. teachers	58	63,04%
C. classmates	2	2,17%
D. others	1	1,09%
E. books or dictionaries	31	33,70%
17.When I am asked to use technologies that I haven't used before(e. g. internet discussion):	92	11,11%
A. I usually try to learn new skills	89	96,74%
B. I learn them following others	2	2,17%
C.I feel worried, but anyway	1	1,09%
18.Think the following way is most useful in my English study	92	11,11%
A. taking notes	43	46,74%
C. doing exercises of grammar, translation, words etc.	48	52,17%
D. classifying or grouping or comparing	1	1,09%
19.I usually use materials selected:	92	11,11%
B. mostly by teachers	22	23,91%
C. by teachers and by myself	69	75,00%
D. mostly by myself	1	1,09%
Grand Total	82	8
	8	100,00%

As table 2 shows, the vast majority of students (95.7%) study English in order to get a good job, because of their interest of English culture, such as films, sports, music, etc. Unexpectedly, all of them (100%)

consider teacher-learner relationship as receiver and giver which implies that they need their teachers' assistance; moreover, 75-% of them declare themselves as responsible for their learning; to be exact, they attribute their failure or success to themselves, and 15.2-% to the environment. In response to item 14, 48.9-% of them strongly agree or agree that students should design the teaching plan together with their teachers, and 47.8 have a neutral opinion.

More than half of them (60.09-%) assert that they depend on themselves before they answer. However, 12% of them rely on others' answers, and 10.09% of them show that they would ask their teachers for clarification regarding their questions. As expected, 63% of students prefer their teachers to correct their mistakes. On the other hand, 33.7% of them use books or dictionaries to correct their own mistakes. Only a few of them rely on their classmates to correct their mistakes.

Furthermore, the vast majority of students (96.7%) prefer to use technologies. Again, half of students (52.2%) prefer to do exercises of grammar, translation, word, etc., and 46.7% of them prefer taking notes during their classes. Regarding the last item, 75% of them use materials selected by their teachers and themselves. On the other hand, only 23.09% of them agree that they use materials selected by their teachers/professors.

Table 3: Professors' perceptions of learner autonomy

	Agree		Disagree		Strongly agree		Strongly disagree		Unsure		Total	Total
1. Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy	4	36.4%	2	18.2%	3	27.3%		0.0%	2	18.2%	11	100.0%
2. Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy	4	36.4%	2	18.2%	3	27.3%		0.0%	2	18.2%	11	100.0%
3. Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn	5	45.5%		0.0%	5	45.5%		0.0%	1	9.1%	11	100.0%
4. Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners	3	27.3%		0.0%	3	27.3%		0.0%	5	45.5%	11	100.0%
5. Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom	6	54.5%	3	27.3%	1	9.1%		0.0%	1	9.1%	11	100.0%
6. Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy	9	81.8%		0.0%	2	18.2%		0.0%		0.0%	11	100.0%
7. Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher	5	45.5%	4	36.4%	1	9.1%		0.0%	1	9.1%	11	100.0%
8. It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults	9	81.8%		0.0%	1	9.1%		0.0%	1	9.1%	11	100.0%

	Agree		Disagree		Strongly agree		Strongly disagree		Unsure		Total	Total
11. Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence	6	54.5%		0.0%	4	36.4%		0.0%	1	9.1%	11	100.0%
12. Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds	7	63.6%		0.0%	4	36.4%		0.0%		0.0%	11	100.0%
13. Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher centered classrooms	3	27.3%	2	18.2%	3	27.3%	1	9.1%	2	18.2%	11	100.0%
14. Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching	4	36.4%		0.0%	4	36.4%	1	9.1%	2	18.2%	11	100.0%
15. Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher	5	45.5%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%	6	54.5%	11	100.0%
16. Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together	7	63.6%		0.0%	3	27.3%		0.0%	1	9.1%	11	100.0%
17. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed	7	63.6%	1	9.1%	3	27.3%		0.0%		0.0%	11	100.0%
18. Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher	2	18.2%	4	36.4%	1	9.1%	2	18.2%	2	18.2%	11	100.0%
19. Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy	8	72.7%		0.0%	3	27.3%		0.0%		0.0%	11	100.0%
20. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials	4	36.4%		0.0%	3	27.3%		0.0%	4	36.4%	11	100.0%
21. Learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy	4	36.4%	1	9.1%	6	54.5%		0.0%		0.0%	11	100.0%

	Agree		Disagree		Strongly agree		Strongly disagree		Unsure		Total	Total
22. Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy	7	63.6%	2	18.2%	2	18.2%		0.0%		0.0%	11	100.0%
23. Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated	8	72.7%		0.0%	3	27.3%		0.0%		0.0%	11	100.0%
24. Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner	4	36.4%		0.0%	6	54.5%		0.0%	1	9.1%	11	100.0%
25. Become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning	5	45.5%		0.0%	6	54.5%		0.0%		0.0%	11	100.0%
Grand Total	126	49.8%	21	8.3%	70	27.7%	4	1.6%	32	12.6%	253	100.0%

The results show that professors have positive attitudes toward promoting learner autonomy in language learning and teaching; all of them strongly agree or agree that language learner of all ages could develop learner autonomy.

Surprisingly, 12.2% of them are unsure, and 18.2% show disagreement. Half of them (61.7%) strongly agree or agree that independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy. 18.2% have a neutral opinion, and 18.2% disagree. The majority of professors (91%) strongly agree or agree that learners could make choices about how they learn. Only a few of them are unsure. Half of them (54.65%) strongly agree or agree that individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners. Results also indicate that professors (81%) agree to involve students in decisions about what to learn. 9.3% of them are unsure.

According to the table above, 63.6% of professors strongly agree or agree that autonomy could be developed most effectively through learning outside the classroom. On the other hand, 27.3% of them disagree with this claim, while one of them has a neutral opinion. 45.5% of them indicate that learner autonomy means learning without a teacher, and 36.4% of them disagreed with that claim. The vast majority of professors (90.9%) state that learner autonomy could be possible with both young language learners and with adults. 94.3% of them strongly agree or agree that confident language learners could develop autonomy more than those who lack confidence. Regarding item 10, all of them state that learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, 54.6% of them strongly agree or agree that LA could not be promoted in teacher-centered classrooms, while 27.3% of them strongly disagree or disagree. However, only 18.2% are unsure. The majority of professors (72.8%) strongly agree or agree that LA implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching. 45.5% agree that learners need the help of the teacher, and 54.5% of them are unsure.

The vast majority (90.9%) of them strongly agree or agree that LA could be promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together; unexpectedly, 90.9% of them declare that students should be free to decide how their learning will be assessed. All of them agree with item 16. They state that classrooms should provide conditions for developing learner autonomy. 81.8% of them agree that teachers should assign students to out-class tasks which require learners to use the internet. In response to items 18 and 19, the majority of them strongly agree or agree that motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated and that LA has a positive effect on their success. Regarding the last item, all of them strongly agree or agree that learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.

5. Discussion of findings

Students' responses show a positive attitude toward learner autonomy in language learning. The majority of them believe in their ability to learn English, to use their free time in English, and to finish their tasks in time. The results show that students are able to create self-exams to assess their progress. This indicates that they do not depend only on their teachers' assessment when it comes to their learning. According to the students' responses, it appears that they are fond of out-class activities to practice and learn English. This implies their independence and willingness to be active learners outside the learning context. Furthermore, they take part in activities such as pair/group discussion, role-play etc. This finding is consistent with a study conducted by Dickenson (1992) who states that "students' involvement in cooperative learning activities enable them to be self-motivated and self-regulated learners taking responsibility for their own learning" (p.140). Moreover, the study finds out that students know their strengths and weaknesses. This is consistent with Thanasoulas's study (2000, as cited in Wejira, 2019) who argues that analyzing learner's strengths and weaknesses, or language learning process is a primary step in a cluster of autonomous learning activities to guide learners to the next stages of their learning process (p. 415). As expected, they are able to choose books, to keep a record of their study, etc. On the other hand, the findings reveal that students lack the readiness to design the teaching plan together with their teachers. This implies that they are not ready to cooperate with their professors in designing plans related to their courses. This is consistent with a study done by Duarte, Leite, and Mouraz (2015) which found out that regardless of the degree of autonomy in learning, all participants viewed teachers as the main source of information.

Furthermore, students prefer their teachers to correct their mistakes. Only a few of them rely on their classmates to correct their mistakes; this is consistent with Mehrin's study (2017) which found out that learners were teacher-dependent. Unexpectedly, all of them (100%) consider teacher-learner relationship as receiver and giver, which implies that they need teachers' assistance. This is consistent with Chan's study in LA (2001). She found out that students expressed heavy dependence on their teachers to guide them towards such autonomy. On the other hand, the participants declared themselves as responsible for their learning. They attribute their failure or success to themselves. This is not consistent with a study conducted by Ningsih (2018) which found that learners perceived teachers as responsible people in the teaching and learning process. Surprisingly, the majority of them declare that they use materials selected by their teachers and themselves. Only a few of them agree that they use materials selected by their teachers.

The findings from the professor questionnaire show that all of them are aware of the concept of learner autonomy. They have positive perceptions of promoting learner autonomy in language learning and teaching. In general, they claim that learners should be involved in deciding what they learn and how they learn. According to the professors' responses, LA can be developed most effectively through learning outside the classroom. Half of them (54.65%) strongly agree or agree that individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners. Most of them show agreement about involving students in decisions about the tasks, activities, materials, and how language is assessed. On the other hand, all of them agree that confident language learners could develop autonomy more than those who lack confidence. Moreover, they express that learner autonomy could be possible with both young language learners and with adults no matter their cultural background.

Interestingly, 45.5 % of them indicate that learner autonomy means learning without a teacher, and 36.4% of them disagree with that claim. This result is not consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Arshiyani and Pishkar (2015). Their results showed that learner autonomy does not mean learning without teachers. On the other hand, this finding is consistent with a study conducted by Borg and Alshumaimeri (2017) that examined the beliefs, practices and constraints related to learner autonomy reported by 369 teachers working at a university in Saudi Arabia which found out that teachers associated learner autonomy with no/little teacher involvement.

Surprisingly, half of them indicate that LA could not be developed without the teacher's help and guidance during classes. This implies that professors are not ready to accept this trend in teaching even though they agree that LA implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching. They also highlight that their faculty must first provide them with appropriate conditions for developing LA. In line with this, Nguyen (2012) adds that teachers should create a supportive learning environment and be flexible in teaching. More specifically, classrooms should have learning centers, then give students chances to use technology, the internet, etc. The majority of them add that teachers should assign students to out-class tasks which require students to use the internet. They also believe that motivated language learners could develop learner autonomy more easily than those who are not motivated and that LA has a positive effect on their success. This is consistent with the findings of the study done by Doğan and Mirici (2017) that investigated EFL instructors' perception and practices on learner autonomy in some Turkish universities which found that the instructors showed agreement when it comes to motivated language learners. Lastly, they agree that learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their language learning.

The findings of the study reveal that students' and professors' perceptions regarding learner autonomy in

the English Department do not overlap at all points. As expected, both students' and professors' perceptions of learner autonomy are generally positive. This is consistent with a study conducted by Farahi (2015) that investigated teachers' and students' perceptions of LA in the ELT Department at Eastern Mediterranean University. Similarly, Arshivan and Pishkar (2015) carried out a study which investigated the relationship between professors' perception of BA students' autonomy and learners' actual level of autonomy. The study showed that there is a positive relationship between teachers' perception of learners' autonomy and learners' actual level of autonomy. By contrast, it is not consistent with a study carried out by Al Asmari (2013) which found out that both students and teachers lacked proper knowledge regarding learner autonomy.

Moreover, students and professors agree that LA could happen both in the classroom and outside of it. They show agreement in developing learner autonomy through out-of-class activities/tasks and using external resources like the internet/tools and independent study in the library. Tolley (2014) claims that teachers and students can cooperate to achieve learner autonomy both inside and outside the classroom setting.

The results reveal that students lacked the readiness to design the teaching plan together with their professors. For instance, most of them said that they select materials together with their professors. It implies that they rely on their professors and prefer sharing instead of making decisions on their own. Furthermore, they see their professors as givers and not as facilitators in teaching. To sum up, there is a slight difference between their perceptions regarding LA in learning and teaching, which verifies the hypothesis of this study.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated professors' and students' perspectives of learner autonomy at the University of Prizren. The results show that students are not ready to take part in designing their courses/syllabi. They show reliance on their professors. On the one side, they want their professors to help and guide them in learning. On the other side, one of the reasons behind this over-reliance might be their inability to make their own decisions or maybe they are not familiar with the term LA. This is similar to a study conducted by Permatasari and Arianti (2016) which found out that students did not understand the concept of learner autonomy. The study finds out that professors are familiar with the notion LA; moreover, they seem willing to apply it in practice with their students. They agree to involve students in their own learning and learning objectives (Al Asmari, 2013). Generally, the results of the study show that even though students show a tendency to like LA in learning, they seem unsure to take responsibility and control their learning; moreover, they consider the teacher as a central figure (giver) who is responsible for their learning. On the other hand, professors express their desire to involve learners in making decisions related to their own learning. To sum up, professors' and students' awareness should be raised about the importance of learner autonomy in learning and teaching.

6.1 Limitations of the study

Limitations of the study include the number of students and professors for both questionnaires of this study. However, the number of students is not small compared with the number of professors. Another limitation of this study is that it could not provide data for other departments of the Faculty of Philology at the University of Prizren. Also, this study could not provide either interviews or questionnaires with representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), to see how they view the trend of learner autonomy in universities. Ultimately, this study could not present data for other universities in Kosovo.

6.2 Recommendations for further research

As previously mentioned, this research provides numerical data regarding learner autonomy only from 92 undergraduate students and 11 professors of the University of Prizren. Further studies should involve other faculties of the University of Prizren and/or other public/private universities in Kosovo. Another recommendation is that the Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) should promote more LA in educational documents. Furthermore, MEST should offer adequate professional development training and workshops to teachers regarding learning autonomy in schools and universities. Similarly, Tamer (2013) adds that training cannot be done without policies and guidelines which promote learner autonomy incorporated into the curriculum. Also, policy makers should take into consideration learner autonomy in policy documents. This would raise awareness on the issue of autonomy inside and outside the classroom.

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