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Distant Learning: Investigating EFL Learners' Perceptions towards and Readiness for Autonomy

The Case of Master 2 Students at Mila University Center

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Master Degree in
Didactics of Foreign Languages

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Dedication

This humble work is dedicated to all whom we love and love us back:

To our parents on the top of the list who have never stopped giving us moral support each time we needed it while working on this dissertation, and for teaching us that even the hardest task can be accomplished if it is done one step at a time;

To our siblings, nieces and nephews, families and friends;

To all those who supported us to take ten more steps forward when we were about to give up;

To each other (the two researchers) for bearing ups and down and for supporting each other through thick and thin;

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Abstract

Distant Learning is a learning that occurs when the learner and the instructor are separated and communication happens via technology. It was implemented universally during COVID-19 pandemic, and it was perceived differently in terms of its effectiveness and influence on autonomy. Therefore, this research is held for the purpose of investigating EFL learners' perceptions towards distant learning and its impact on their readiness for autonomy. In other words, it is conducted to provide a clear answer for the following research questions: (1) What are the perceptions of EFL learners towards distant learning? (2) What are the perceptions of EFL learners towards the impact of distant learning on learners' readiness for autonomy? The disquisition at hand embodies the different variables and the relation between each one of them in its theoretical part: Distant learning, autonomy and EFL learners. The fieldwork is devoted to fulfill the aim of the study using a descriptive method via the questionnaire tool that is administered to Master 2 students of the University Center of Mila. The findings showed that distant learning is effective in comparison to traditional learning, and that it helps in fostering learners' autonomy. This research is significant to teachers and learners given that it determines each one's role for the success of distant learning. It also contributes to future research, for it provides insights to the implementation of distant learning in Algeria and opens doors to discuss new ideas about online learning.

Key words: Distant learning, autonomy, EFL learners, perceptions.online learning.

List of Abbreviations

AL	Autonomous Learning
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CS	Correspondence Study
DE	Distance Education
DL	Distant Learning
E-/e	Electronic
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
OC	Online Courses
OL	Online Learning
Q	Question

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General Introduction

1. Background to the Study

The recent decade witnessed a vast revolution in the field of education. The idea of learning anytime and anywhere turns out to be a major topic of discussion by the emergence of distant learning (DL). The latter is no new type of learning, but rather its roots went back to the early 20th century. Before this, new technological media such as the Internet, online and e- learning resources appeared to replace written books and articles, and many new terms were coined such as independent study, distance education (DE), and home study. As a result, these terms were used formally in 1982 when the International Council for Correspondence Education (ICCE) changed its name to the International Council for Distant Education (ICDE) (Simonson & Seepersaud, 2019).

The present research is conducted in an attempt to offer a clear view about English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' perceptions in the implementation of DL and its ability to foster their autonomy. The current study purports to help in generating new knowledge about the problem that will be stated in the next following paragraphs from the already existing literature.

2. Statement of the Problem

By the rapid development in science and technology, many new and different learning methods have revolutionized the field of education. With the use of technology, the quality of education increased, and the learning process became easier and more flexible than before. In contrast to classical training, distance learning gained a widespread credibility and acceptance. It was defined as a new style of teaching in which

learners received instruction through any form of audio-visual medium. Distance learning was first described by Keegan (1996), as the continuation of learning processes among the trainer and the students who are located in different places with various means.

According to Eisinger (2000), distance learning is a planned learning experience which was formed for certifying learning and which encourages the student's communication, and which may access the students all around the world by addressing them in distant places.

As a result, learners became more interested in online services and programs that fulfill and meet their needs. EFL learners were influenced by this alternative transition that helped them to communicate effectively and became more self-reliant. Tapscot (1999) referred to the young of today as the Net Generation. Pensky (2001) claimed that today's students are no longer the people our education system was designed to teach.

With the growing population of distance learning, students' attitudes towards traditional classroom have changed. This transformation became a difficult and challenging change for both teachers and students especially in Algerian universities in which most learners still depend on old methods and rely on teachers with little use of technology.

3. Aims of the Study

This study highlights two major aims. It aimed at investigating EFL learners' attitudes towards the implementation of distant learning and its impact on learners' readiness for autonomy.

Thus, the main aim is to gather information and points of view from a sample, in this case Master 2 students at the University Center of Mila, to build new knowledge that better contributes to the understanding of the new ways to implement DL in education, and to further support other researches about the same problem tackled. As a result, the findings will set a strong and valid basis for the development of distant education in the future.

4. Research Questions

Consequently, the present research attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1/ What are the perceptions of EFL learners towards distant learning?
- 2/ What are the perceptions of EFL learners towards the impact of distant learning on learners' readiness for autonomy?

5. Significance of the Study

This study is an attempt to explore what EFL learners perceive about distant learning and about its impact on learners' readiness for autonomy. These two aims share a common direction which is to tackle all the obstacles and show all the points that advance learners' skills and abilities in order to pave the way towards the appropriate implementation of distant learning in Algerian Universities. In other words, negative attitudes will reveal the different challenges that prevent the implementation of distant learning whereas positive attitudes will strengthen the application of this type of learning. This research, also, highlights the importance of autonomy in the success of distant learning. Thus, measuring EFL learners' readiness to be autonomous is a huge step for an effective distance education. Ergo, the significance of this research stems from suggesting ways to overcome the encountered difficulties in this type of learning along with manifesting its worth that will lead eventually to its appropriate application

in universities. It also contributes to EFL learning teaching process and of teaching in general in education especially for any foreign language apart from English because implementing distant learning will defeat the spectrum of time and place. Because little research has existed about this issue, this study is deemed significant. It will be a source for future researches, for it helps in exploring the opinions of EFL learners on distant learning.

6. Data Gathering Tools

In order to answer the questions of this study and attain its final goal, data needs to be gathered.

This is a quantitative and qualitative study which deploys the online questionnaire as the main tool that was used because it is accurate and reaches a larger population in a short time.

Since this study is about investigating EFL learners' attitudes, so Master 2 students (96) of didactics of foreign languages (English branch) at Mila University Center were selected with a sample of 36 students. The target population has been chosen for the following reasons:

- Master 2 students are reachable since they are the two researchers' classmates.
- Master 2 students are more experienced than other learners since they have been studying English for at least five years in university.
- Master 2 students of 2022 were exposed to three (3) different types of learning (traditional, distant and blended learning) due to the pandemic which permits them to make a clear distinction between the three.
- Many Master 2 students are either full-time workers, have families, live far from university or are all together i.e. they are most of the time occupied and may have

difficulty in attending traditional classes all the time. So, it is important to know their opinions, and see if this type of learning suits them better.

7. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into two major chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the theoretical part; whereas, the second is for the practical part. Also, chapter one covers three major sections.

Section one deals with the important aspects covering the notion of distant learning. It consists of different definitions of the concept, its history coupled with a set of theories in addition to the implementation of distant learning in the field of education. This section is concluded by the benefits and limitations of DL.

Section two is devoted to EFL learners' attitude towards distant learning. It is mainly about the notion of attitude and EFL learners.

The last part is about EFL learners' perspective towards the impact of distant learning on learners' readiness for autonomy. It contains a brief definition about autonomy according to different resources, approaches to promote autonomous learning in languages' learning, and lastly the relationship between autonomy and DL.

Chapter two examines the practical part which starts with a small introduction followed by details about all what needs to be known about the chosen tool and its description (the questionnaire), the target population and the method used. Undoubtedly, it also contains a deep analysis of each question of the questionnaire, a discussion and a conclusion.

Finally, the dissertation includes a general conclusion, a list of recommendations and the abstract of what has been said and discussed in the pages of this research.

Chapter One: Theoretical Part

Section One: Distant Learning / Distance Education

Introduction

The teaching / learning process has always been a field of continuous change, and new effective ideas have always been welcomed. In the same vein, encountering new problems or difficulties urges the need to take new challenges, try new methods and adopt new approaches.

With the emergence of the pandemic of COVID-19, a necessity for a different kind of learning has been brought to court of universal education which is distance education or distant learning. It is important to mention that it is not a new one, but it was used as an option before, yet during the crisis it seemed the only solution. However, it was not quite applied in its correct measures in Algeria due to many reasons.

This section of chapter one covers all the main subtitles and historical dimensions that will help in the understanding of the key notion “distant learning”. It also includes the different theories that caused the evolution of distant learning. It contains the two sides of the coin: The challenges that faces distance education and its benefits. Then, light is cast on the notable roles of learners and teachers that changed under distant learning.

1. Definition of Distant Learning

According to Willis (1993), the terms “distance education”, “distance learning/teaching” and “tele-learning/teaching” can all be used interchangeably to describe the same type of learning which is distant learning.

Distant learning or distance education was defined by many specialists of the field, but they can all be summarized to mean the learning that can take a distant place and/ or time from the learning instruction. It is a flexible type of learning instruction that can cope with different situations of the learners.

It can be defined as: “Institution-based, formal education where the learning group is separated, and where interactive telecommunication systems are used to connect learners, resources and instructors” (Simonson, 2009, as cited in Simonson & Seepersaud, 2019, p.1).

Simonson (2009) and Seepersaud (2019) indicated that this definition embraces four fundamental elements. The first element is instruction-based. It means that it is used by official institutions and academic learning environments like schools and colleges as a distinction from self-directed learning environment. Geographic separation is the second element that comprises the disunion of teachers and learners in time and place and even in their intellectual capacities in comparison to their learners. Hence, it suggests the notion of asynchronous distance education. That is having teachers put instruction in the agreed on platform and having learners check it at a separate time. The third element is interactive telecommunications i.e. the availability of interaction as an option via telecommunication systems like telephone, television and the Internet. This interaction can happen at the same time, but it is not limited to that because the focus should not be deviated from the content or the instruction. Finally, it manifests the learning community created by distant learning. It is composed

of the teacher who delivers the content, the learners who receive it, and the instruction delivered via electronic resources (e-resources).

Among the previous elements, maybe what distinguishes distant learning more is the separation element. In the same sense, Willis (1993) stated that: “At its most basic level, distance learning takes place when an instructor and student(s) are separated by physical distance, and technology (e.g. audio, video, and data) are used to bridge the instructional gap”. (p. 4)

The other elements are also important and were mentioned in other definitions. One of which is Bork and Gunnarsdottir’s (2001, p. 20): “It sees the learning activity as a transferring information for a knowledgeable individual to a student, through some intervening media. The focus is on information”.

Keegan (1996) emphasized some concepts in his definition like the separation factor and the use of media (print) as a form of industrial view (Peters, 1988) with a mass production in a two-way communication (Simonson & Seepersaud, 2019). Yet, he did not specify what kind of separation is there, nor he explained how learners and instructors interact (Saykılı, 2018).

Edward (1995) argued that distance education and open learning cannot be used interchangeably without giving a clear definition to each. For him, DE works on mass production; whereas, open learning is individualized and localized according to the learners’ needs (Simonson & Seepersaud, 2019).

It is also important to mention that “virtual schools” are as real as actual schools where learning and teaching occurs; that is why, there are claims to change the word virtual because it means something potential or not real which is not the case for those virtual schools (Simonson & Seepersaud, 2019).

Definitions of distant learning or distance education changed due to the shift from correspondence study materials to the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the increase focus on communication (Saykılı, 2018). Thus, a more contemporary definition would be as follow: Distance education is the type of learning that includes having distant learners and instructors in time and place which is made possible through the use of technology such as e-materials or online means. Also, it is where instruction can be synchronous, asynchronous or hybrid (Papadopoulou, 2020).

2. Key Terms and Definitions

- **Electronic Learning (E-learning):**It is the kind of learning that does not require having access to the net to get to the course i.e. through wireless materials such as DVDs, CDs and applications on computers (*Types of Distance Learning* , 2015).
- **Online Learning (OL):** Unlike e-learning, access to the net is a must-have in this kind of learning. It offers the possibility for all kinds of interaction and whatever e-material or online site needed (*Types of Distance Learning*, 2015).
- **Open Learning:** It is the kind of learning that is open to all learners who get to decide about all the learning components (time, space, pace, method, media, etc.) and which provides them with valuable opportunities (Caliskan, 2012).

3. Types of Distant Learning

Distant learning has multiple types which are varied from one source to another, yet only the most known ones are going to be mentioned with explanation to make a clear distinction between them.

3.1.Synchronous Distant Learning

Synchronous distant learning is an online learning method that permits a live simultaneous communication between a group of learners and their tutor. It embraces delivering an educational content and solving learning activities through online means such as videoconferencing / teleconferencing, webinars and groups' cam chats (Simon, 2021; Al-Atabi & Al-Noori, 2020; *Types of Distance Learning*, 2015).

This type of DL is highly advantageous, for it provides immediate or same-time virtual class interaction which enables students to ask questions, get feedback instantly and engage in a discussion (*Types of Distance Learning*, 2015). However, synchronous online learning is pre-scheduled which excludes the privilege of flexibility (Simon, 2021).

3.2. Asynchronous Distant Learning

Asynchronous DL is a non-simultaneous type of DL that does not compels students with scheduled online classes. Students have the chance to work at their own pace, time and place with a deadline for submitting the assignments. It provides many tools such as textbooks, CDs / DVDs, emails, virtual libraries and online databases (Simon, 2021; *Types of Distance Learning*, 2015).

In comparison to synchronous OL, asynchronous DE is more flexible because students are free to check content at any time and as many times needed (Simon, 2021; *Types of Distance Learning*, 2015). Thus, they are required to be more self-regulated which is challenging for many of them. It also creates the disadvantage of social isolation because of less interaction opportunities and less instant feedback (*Types of Distance Learning*, 2015).

3.3. Hybrid Distance Education

In this type of DE, students have the chance to get Internet education based on both synchronous and asynchronous types of DE at the same time. In other words, they can attend scheduled meeting calls if the time suits them, but in case they miss one of them; they can check the recorded meeting and write comments on the video or online conversations to interact beyond the live-class time. Also, they have the opportunity to study at their own learning pace, but they have to respect the exam or the assignment deadlines (Simon, 2021).

Synchronous, asynchronous and hybrid distance education have different courses types such as:

a. Video Conferencing: It is a tool used in synchronous learning in which participants (2 or more) interact via a live video from any place in the world at the same time (Simon, 2021).

b. Open Schedule Online Courses: As the name suggests, it gives students freedom of scheduling courses at their own pace but with a determined deadline (Simon, 2021).

c. Fixed Time Online Courses: In contrary to the open schedule online courses (OC), fixed time OC gives students less room to study at their own pace. They are compelled to log in to sites at a set time to complete certain activities (Simon, 2021).

d. Correspondence Learning: It is an asynchronous type of learning, for studying at one's own pace is gained through traditional materials like textbooks and study guides and e-materials such as regular emails (*Types of Distance Learning*, 2015).

3.4. Fixed E-Learning vs. Adaptive E-learning

In Fixed E-Learning, content and materials are pre-decided and selected and are the same for all learners. However, in Adaptive E-learning, content and materials are decided upon the features of the target learners (preferences, level, learning styles, need

and objectives) i.e. the courses are adaptive and personalized (Al-Atabi & Al-Noori, 2020).

3.4.Linear E-Learning vs. Interactive E-Learning

Linear E-Learning is a one-way communication in which there is only a delivery of information via computer / Television / radio to the student (receiver). Unlike Linear E-Learning, Interactive E-Learning permits two-way communication in which students and teachers exchange communication (Al-Atabi & Al-Noori, 2020).

3.5.Individual Online Learning vs. Collaborative Online Learning

Individual OL does not encourage group work but rather focus on developing individual skills and performances. Collaborative Online Learning encourages collaborative work of a group of learners who have to work together as one to fulfil common goals (Al-Atabi & Al-Noori, 2020).

4. A Brief History of Distant Learning

It is paramount to trace back the history of a concept in order to predict its future path. Distance learning seems to be a new concept, but ,in fact, it has existed for more than a century ago (Willis, 1993; Simonson & Seepersaud, 2019): Starting with correspondence study (CS), passing through electronic communication and reaching distance teaching universities (Simonson & Seepersaud, 2019).

DL first emerged in the form of CS where course materials were delivered through mail, but it officially started in the mid-1800s with the foundation of Issac Pitman's colleges in England in the form of a one-way communication. This form of study allowed many females, leaners who live far from universities, soldiers and others to get an education. Later on, CS was developed, and it acquired universal dimensions with the creation of extension programs at universities. The University of Chicago was

the first one to implement such DL program where the number of distant students increased each year (Cruz, 2015).

With the integration of communication technologies, DL evolved through four generations. The first generation (1850s to 1950s) integrated radio and television in addition to printed materials. The second generation (1960 -1985) used the first one's media with recorded-cassettes and fax. The two generations, with the use of CS concepts, shaped the creation of open universities like the British Open University in 1969 (Matthews, 1999 as cited in Cruz, 2015). Then, the third generation technologies (1985-1995) implied the use of computers in transmitting DL courses. Internet-based media (online learning) and computer based learning (E-learning) define the fourth and last generation which is still used today with continuous changes that make DL effective and efficient for learners and teachers interaction and benefit all the concerned parts in the learning process (Cruz, 2015).

5. Theories of Distant Learning

Correspondence study of classical American and European models helped in shaping theories to distant learning. With the evolution of DL concepts, a new theory emerged based on The American educational system (Simonson et al., 1999).

Theories have a prominent role in the application of this learning type. Holmberg (1986) indicated that “theoretical considerations give distance educators a touchstone, against which decision can be made with confidence” (as cited in Simonson, et al., 1999, p.16). Aside from Holmberg (1995), Moore (1972) and Keegan (1995) also highlighted the importance of having a solid theory in order to achieve a progress in implementing DL (Simonson et al., 1999).

In his famous work “The Foundations of Distance Education”, Keegan (1986) categorized those theories. Some of which are the following:

5.1.Theories of Independence and Autonomy

Theories were divided according to the American system of Wedemeyer and the European system of Moore.

5.1.1. Wedemeyer’s Theory

Like Keegan, Wedmeyer, a university professor, used the expression of “independent study” to refer to distance education” because he regarded students’ independence as the basis of this type of learning. He wanted to update the education system with the appropriate use of modern technology and by realizing 10 characteristics which can be summarized in these concepts:

- Giving more flexibility and learning opportunities to learners, and centralizing the process around them, so they can be more responsible.
- Freeing teachers from administrative and custodial duties, so they can devote their time in teaching. They are also permitted to be flexible in adapting and adopting new techniques, methods, media, evaluation criteria and lectures’ designs according to their learners’ individual differences and preferences and to better the output.

(Simonson et al., 1999)

5.1.2. Moore’s Theory

5.1.2.1 Transactional Distance Theory

Moore and Kearsley (1996, p. 200) pointed out that the teacher – learner separation in DL can “lead to communication gaps, a psychological space of potential misunderstandings between the behaviors of instructors and those of the learners”. In order to prevent this, Moore (1997) suggested in his theory two essential elements that can strengthen the transactions between learners and students which are: dialogue and structure (Falloon, 2011).

a. Dialogue: It refers to the fulfilment of two-way communication that includes all kinds of interaction in a way that is efficient and effective in solving distant learners' problems (Falloon, 2011).

b. Structure: It is related to the course nature such as bridging the gap between the course goals and students' needs, the assessment tool used and approach chosen (learner or teacher-centered) (Falloon, 2011).

5.1.2.2 Learners' Autonomy

Moore (1994) placed importance on learners' autonomy by lessening the role of the teacher and engaging students more. To see if distance education is determined by learners or by teachers (autonomous or non- autonomous), autonomy is measured by seeing who get to decide about the selection of these elements: The objectives and goals of learning, the resources/ media and methods of learning and evaluation (Simonson, et al., 1999). In other words, the extent of autonomy is measured through "the extent to which the learner exerts control over learning procedures" (Giossos et al., 2009, p. 2).

McIsaac and Gunawardena (1996), in addition to Moore (1994), explained an inverse relationship between the three factors of Moore's theory. For instance, "a course with an inflexible structure can lead to a decrease in the quality of dialogue and sense of learner autonomy, thereby increasing the students' perception of transactional distance" (Falloon, 2011, p. 190).

5.2. Theories of Interaction and Communication

Holmberg (1995) included the concepts of earlier theories in his theory to advocate learners' autonomy and flexibility in choices. His theory indicated that DL promotes cognitive skills where learning is individualized and linked to all modes of learning. Motivation, emotions and different personal relations are capitalized.

However, if DL is not well applied, it may lead to rigid education system of delivering mere facts and will be less effective. This theory is important in identifying the characteristics of DL (Simonson et al., 1999).

6. Role of Teachers and Learners in Distant Learning

There are many actors in the learning process of Distant Learning like directors and group designers who work on implementing and organizing the whole process (Isman et al., 2004). Nevertheless, is important to focus on the prominent role of both teachers and learners since they represent the essence of the education delivery and receiving.

6.1. Teachers' Role

Teachers' role has shifted from traditional classroom to distant learning to acquire new functions, and to put more focus on the learners' role rather than the teacher's. In spite of that, teachers play a fundamental role in achieving this type of learning, which is mostly hidden, to show the learner as the main actor especially with the high demands to apply learner-centered approach by the 1970s. Thus, the role of the teacher revolves around guiding, monitoring and facilitating the learning process (Sáiz, 2008; Isman et al., 2004; Mayasari & Kemal, 2020). A distant teacher can function as:

a. Provider of Learning Resources

Teachers design and select suitable learning resources and adopt those set by the decision-makers based on students' background knowledge, level and characteristics (Isman et al., 2004; Mayasari & Kemal, 2020).

b. Demonstrator

Teachers use teaching strategies and methods to better use materials and media. They act as facilitators of the content to explain materials using media (Mayasari & Kemal, 2020).

c. Motivator

Teachers use different ways and techniques to enhance learners' motivation in order to make them more engaged in their learning, believe in their abilities and develop their skills. Thus, teachers must select interesting tasks and activities and create a positive learning environment which helps them to reach shared and individual goals (Isman et al., 2004; Mayasari & Kemal, 2020). Teachers should also support learners to become autonomous and encourage them to have collaborative work and discussions where they act as their advisors (Isman et al., 2004).

d. Manager

Teachers should be able to manage their teaching especially students' groups in virtual classes (Mayasari & Kemal, 2020).

e. Guide

They should direct learners towards the accomplishment of basic competences and guide them to reach the learning goals in accordance with their differences and needs (Isman et al., 2004).

f. Evaluator

Teachers still evaluate students but not in the usual ways. Since there is less face-to-face interaction, regular assignments are given to students to accomplish by a deadline in order to evaluate the presented content and the course effectiveness and provide feedback (Isman et al., 2004; Mayasari & Kemal, 2020).

In addition to all those roles, teachers have to update their knowledge regularly and encourage efficient communication and ideas' exchange with students (Isman et al., 2004).

6.2.Learners' Role

Levine and Sun (2002), Pallof and Pratt (1999, 2003), Piskurich (2003, 2004), Flores (2004) and other scholars tried to study the role of learners under DL. Distance Education placed a high responsibility on learners. Thus, it is important to set a list of functions to guide and prepare distant learners for their role. In Birch's (2001) list, he suggested that their role encompasses five competences: Operational, cognitive, collaborative, self-directing and course-specific (Sáiz, 2008).

a. Operational Competence

It involves the ability to use ICTs in order to make all operations necessary in the learning process and construction of knowledge like searching for information online, selecting and analyzing. Furthermore, It includes the appropriate use of ICTs that enables them to communicate with the actors of this learning i.e. instructors and fellow students (Sáiz,2008; Isman et al., 2004).

b. Cognitive Competence

It involves developing skills related to the course content. In other words, they should know how to check the course content, plan, materials and resources and how to apply the learnt knowledge as well as developing critical thinking (Sáiz, 2008).

c. Collaborative Competence

It manifests in having a fruitful communication environment where different ideas and opinions are discussed, comprehension is ensured, feedback is given and received and all types of efficient interactions are used. So, learners should get rid of the fear of communication (Sáiz, 2008; Isman et al., 2004).

d. Self-Directing Competence

Like developing skills, learners should also prepare their mental state to accept differences of ideas and new perspectives, their own and others' mistakes, make original work, learn from peers and be autonomous and self-monitor. Every student should set an individual goal, schedule, plan and focus on these elements during his/her learning. Then, learners should reflect on their own work and performance (self-evaluation) to better the results (Sáiz, 2008; Isman et al., 2004).

e. Course-Specific Competence

It includes all the preparation beforehand like vocabulary and content related to the subject in order to have an efficient contribution in the discussion (Sáiz, 2008).

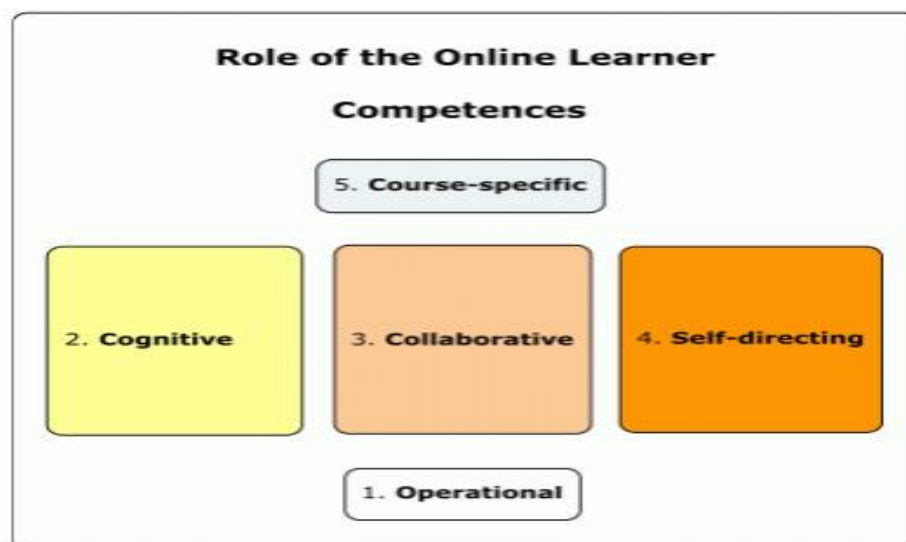


Figure 1: Role of the Online Learner Competences (Goodyear et al., 2001)

Figure 1 shows the five competences with operational competence at the bottom to clarify that it is the basis for distant learners as they should master ICTs skills to operate their learning (Borges, 2008). Thus, distant learners should develop all the skills to acquire and develop those competences, and they should be researchers, problem solvers and real life students (Sáiz, 2008; Isman et al., 2004).

7. Implementing Distant Learning in EFL Learning

To implement an effective distant learning program destined to given learners, a set of steps are required: an organized planning on the basis of learners' needs, selection of adequate technological means and cooperation between the technical team of this process (Willis, 1993). There is a set of studies that investigates the implementation of distant learning in EFL instruction such as:

Dewi's research (2021) investigated the implementation of online learning in EFL classroom during the pandemic of Covid-19. The aim of the study was to explore the different opportunities that online learning offers as well as the drawbacks it encounters according to teachers and students' perceptions. The data was conducted through interviewing and observing a sample of teachers in SMPN 32 OKU and 7th grade students from Baturaja District, Indonesia. Overall, the findings showed that online learning was advantageous in terms of flexibility opportunities, availability of facilitation tools for different tasks, making learners' more active and providing an updated and quick type of learning. Nevertheless, it revealed its downside during its implementation such as lack of or less interaction, poor access to the net and ICTs skills and less originality in students' work. That is why, Dewi (2021) encouraged having more communication between learners and their instructors to improve the understanding of the learning input and the quality of the output. Technical support and tutoring of ICTs skills must also be provided to both teachers and learners who should do their work properly for an efficient implementation of DL.

Another research was held about a similar investigation. It aimed at exploring learners' views on online learning implementation during Covid-19 outbreaks. Data were extracted from online interviews with a sample of Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners who all supported home study during the spread of the pandemic. The results also displayed the influence of online learning on fostering learners' autonomy.

However, there were different obstacles that appeared during its implementation which are very similar to Dewi's (2021) results. Because of lack of expertise and knowledge about online learning, it was less effective than face-to-face instruction. This research is valuable to overcome online learning barriers using learners' perceptions (Melvina et al., 2020).

The last chosen study was about the implementation of distance education in English language teaching which was conducted via interviews, observations and documentaries from Senior High School in SMA N1 Wangon, Indonesia. Syarif's research (2021) purpose was to describe the steps of this operation to make a universal DL model and to detect DL's implementation restrictions. The results channeled three steps for DL application: The preparatory stage, the implementation stage and the evaluation stage. The second stage is made successful through administrators whom manage the learning system, teachers who guide students and supervise their learning and students who must be active and take charge of their learning. The final stage is devoted to signal the different challenges that emerge in the process which are also analogous with the two previously mentioned studies (Dewi, 2021; Melvina et al., 2020). Moreover, low motivation and inadequate tools in teaching languages are also among DL deficiencies. Thus, coordination between distance education members is necessary for better DL application (Syarif, 2021).

These studies and others are significant because they provide insights for future implementation of distance education.

8. Benefits and Factors for Success in Distant Learning

Freedom, flexibility and physical distance are the three "F"s that take the headlines of distant learning benefits'. These advantages of DL and others are detailed and explained in the coming points:

- **Flexibility:** Unlike the rigidity in traditional classroom, DL provides flexible learning which is considered as a great gain for students (Oliveira et al., 2018; Bušelić, 2012; Rose & Iloanya, 2016; Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021). Flexibility is manifested in various dimensions: Students can study at any time and at any place that suit them, they co-determine the quality and the amount of content delivered, and they also get to decide about their learning pace (Rose & Iloanya, 2016). As Webster and Hackley (1997, p. 1284) put in their words: “It frees learners from the constraints of time and space, and it offers flexible learning opportunities for individual and group learners”.
- **Content Availability:** Students in DL have the privilege of reviewing the content whenever needed since the lectures are recorded and saved in videos or audios (Oliveira et al., 2018). This can help slow learners to grasp the content more.
- **Low-Cost:** In comparison to TL, which vary in costs, DL is more affordable (Oliveira et al., 2018), for it costs less or even can be for free especially from governmental universities.
- **Effectiveness:** DL has proven to be effective, and this can be measured through the attainment of the course goals’ with reduced time and energy (Joshua et al., 2016, as cited in Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021). It can also be seen in the quality of the learning process with multiple materials and the variety of tasks that tackles the higher thinking levels (Mansbash, 2015, as cited in Rose & Iloanya, 2016).
- **Individual Differences:** DL focuses on learners’ needs (Huang & Chiu, 2015), learners’ types (slow and fast ones) and learning styles by varying the learning

approaches (Songkram et al., 2015) and providing different choices of technology (as cited in Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021).

- **Equality:** DL provides the same content and learning experience to all students with different background regardless of their age, country, ethnic group or culture as well as to disabled people (Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021) or to people having war. This helps in creating a peaceful environment free from bullying.
- **Developing New Skills:** In addition to what traditional learning offers as skills, DL also provides extra ones like autonomy, technology and communication skills (Aithal and Aithal, 2016, as cited in Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021).
- **Richness of Opportunities:** DL provides opportunities to complete a degree or get additional job-training while balancing work and family commitment or get an education during anytime of their life (Bušelić, 2012).

9. Disadvantages and Challenges of Distant Learning

Though DL seems to be flawless thanks to its wide list of advantages, yet it has some disadvantages and unsolved challenges.

- **Low Self-Discipline:** Flexibility can easily turn into a drawback if not managed appropriately. Students must not rely completely on the tutor; they should try to be autonomous (Oliveira et al., 2018). Lazy students or those who find difficulty in self-motivating may abandon or fail in the class (Raspopovic et al., 2017, as cited in Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021; Brown, 2017, as cited in Sadeghi, 2019).
- **No Immediate Interaction and Feedback:** Not all courses are live, so when the student has a question, he must wait till future contacts with instructors (Oliveira et al., 2018). The same thing applies for feedback, the tutors will not give immediate remarks only after having reviewing the work of each learner (Bušelić, 2012). Also, there is less interaction between the student and the tutor

and among students as well (Islam, Beer and Slack, 2015 as cited in Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021), especially verbal communication (Bušelić, 2012). Overall, they will have a difficulty getting touch with the tutors to overcome some learning troubles (Hutt, 2017, as cited in Sadeghi, 2019).

- **Social Isolation:** The development of social skills is reduced since the students often study alone, yet this feeling started to demolish with the use of video calls and instant chats (Bušelić, 2012).
- **Inadequate Training of ICTs:** Students and teachers must master the use of technology or receive a training to it (Bušelić, 2012; Rose & Iloanya, 2016).
- **Deadlines:** Busy students may forget about a deadline for delivering the work or make an online test (Bijeesh, 2017, as cited in Sadeghi, 2019). Also, deadlines can cause a real frustration and pressure especially with the lack of a balanced schedule between the different commitment and studies.
- **Lack of Credibility:** Nagrale (2013, as cited in Sadeghi, 2019) argues that DL diploma is still not acknowledged as a qualified degree by many companies (to get a job).
- **Limited Access to Net Connection:** Since DL depends totally on technology and Internet, it is important to have a good access to it. Yet, many parts in the world suffer from poor net connection, especially in Africa (Molawa, 2009, as cited in Rose & Iloanya, 2016). Also, in case of facing any technical problem with software, the learning process will be hindered (Brown, 2017, as cited in Sadeghi, 2019).

Chapter Two: Theoretical Part

Section Two: EFL Learners' Attitudes towards Distant Learning

Because this section is devoted to EFL learners' attitude towards distant learning, the following paragraphs will discuss the notion of attitude, its definition, related aspects, and various components of the tackled concept.

1. Notion of Attitude

The concept of attitude is studied by psychologists, sociologists, scientists, researchers, and even anthropologists. However, this notion is considered as an important domain in social psychology; as a result, attitude gains a lot of interest in the field. Allport (1935, as cited in Krosnick et al.,2005), a famous figure in social psychology, pointed out in his classic article the following observation;

The concept of attitude is probably the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary social psychology ...this useful, one might almost say peaceful concept has been so widely adopted that it has virtually established itself as the keystone in the edifice of American social psychology. In fact several writers (Bogardus, 1931; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918; Folsom, 1931) define social psychology as the scientific study of attitudes.

(as cited in Krosnick et al.,2005,p.22)

Based on the previous statement, attitudes are considered as a core value for the scientific study of psychology that is proven by many writers.

1.1.Definition of Attitude

What is an attitude? Several definitions can be found, and the base of most explanations has been that attitudes are evaluations of concepts, objects, or persons ranging from positive to negative .As a result, our attitudes towards a person, a religion, and political party reflect the way the world is perceived.

There are multi definitions suggested by different social scientists, and most of them are interrelated except in few aspects. In his highly influential chapter about the concept of attitude, Allport (1935) mentioned various definitions, and probably the most inclusive one was the following:“An attitude is a mental or neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related.” (Krosnick et al.,2005).

Allport related attitude to a mental state in which individuals are ready to perform acts and reflections towards present situations on the basis of already learned experiences. The latter is better manifested in the definition of Fishben and Ajzen (1975) who claimed that attitude are learned.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, p.6), attitude has a learned nature:“An attitude is a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object.”

On the other hand, Eagly and Chaiken, (1993, p.1) have eliminated that aspect and emphasize the evaluative tendency of attitudes: “Attitude is a psychological

tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor.”

In their studies, Huskinson and Haddock (2006) defined attitudes as: “Overall evaluations of stimuli that are derived from the favorability of an individual's affects, cognitions, and past behaviors”.

Based on the previous definitions, it can be concluded that attitude is a predisposed evaluation of an object, situation or person as a result of previous experience that expressed positive (like) or negative (dislike) feedback or assessment.

1.2.Aspects of Attitude

Attitudes are marked by different fundamental features, and the above mentioned definition of Allport (1935) tackles two important aspects that largely contribute in understanding the concept of attitude (Krosnick et al.,2005).

The first, which is the most important one, refers to readiness for response .This aspect emphasized the idea that attitude is not a behavior, rather it is a prepared action / behavior to react or respond to the attitude object. The latter can be a person, a thing, a belief, an emotion, or even a place. This aspect is supported by the following definition: "Readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way" (Jung, 1971, as cited in Oskamp & Schultz ,2005).

The second aspect is the motivating force or driving power of attitude. That is to say attitudes are not always related to passive experiences. Alternatively, Allport (1935, p.810) expressed two active actions related to attitudes, and he pointed to them as “exerting a directive or dynamic influence”. Dynamic emphasizes the relation between stimulus and behavior; whereas, directive means that the behavior is guided in its form and manner(Krosnick et al.,2005).

Beside these two aspects, attitudes are also characterized by other features such as its enduring nature which is not the case for all attitudes. Some of them can be a stable phenomenon that persists over a long period of time while others are changeable.

The evaluative aspect of attitude has also gained a great interest in recent research. For instance, Olson and Maio (2003) refer to attitudes as “tendencies to evaluate objects favorably or unfavorably” (p. 299). Bem (1972), on the other hand, defines attitudes as: “Attitudes are likes and dislikes” (as cited in Oskamps & Schultz, 2005, p. 8), this definition clearly highlights the importance of the evaluation aspect.

To sum up, attitudes are hypothetical construct that expresses a person's tendency towards an object. They can be positive or negative.

1.3.Components of Attitudes

Attitudes have a particular interest in the field of psychological research. There are several main theoretical viewpoints about the essential components that form attitudes (Huskinson & Haddock, 2007).

The first theory to demonstrate the different components of attitudes is the tripartite theory or the tri-componential view point that divides the concept of attitude into three components; affect, cognition, and behavior (the ABC of attitude). Psychologists such as Rosenberg, Eagley, and Hovland have better described this model. In respect, the affective component deals with the emotions and feelings towards an object. The cognitive component on the other hand is the range of facts and knowledge about the object or thing. Lastly, the behavioral component is the tendency to react or behave towards the object (Drew, 2022).

According to early history, these three elements are related. However, some researchers emphasized that these components are distinguished (Breckler, 1984; kothandapani, 1971; Ostrom, 1969 as cited in Fabrigar, 2005, p. 82). Some recent

studies have refined the tripartite theory. Thus, this model though considered as the structure of attitude, has fallen out of favor, and has been criticized since 1920's (Drew, 2022).

As a result, other models that have seen these elements as separate components emerged. As (Sutton and Douglas, 2020, p.151) argue: "We want to study how people's behavior is related to how they think and feel about attitude objects. We do not want to simply define their behavior as an inherent part of their attitude" (Drew, 2022).

We cannot deny the utility of the tripartite theory that shapes the form of attitude. Thus, our behavior is influenced by cognitive and affective reactions towards objects.

1.4. Attitudes as a Predictor of Behavior

The relationship between attitude and behavior turns out to be the debate of the time. It is argued that attitude can predict the future behavior. Many researchers work on to create a causal relationship between the two in which attitudes are meant to be the cause of behavior (Jaccard & Blanton, 2005, p. 146).

Due to this, a large amount of research has been conducted to show the relationship between these two variables by investigating the various definitions of attitudes that show the explicit link between attitudes and behavior. In this respect, it is argued that attitudes are of little value unless they can predict overt behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005).

There are two research models for the study of attitude-behavior relationship. The first, attributed primarily to sociologist De Fleur and his associates, is characterized as a "contingent consistency" approach to attitude-behavior study. The second, which is largely the work of psychologist Fishbein and his associates, redefines some earlier concepts and emphasizes the variable of "behavior intentions". In an

empirical evaluation of the two approaches, measures are taken of attitude, behavior intentions, normative beliefs and behavior (Albrecht & Carpenter ,1976).

To sum up, attitude is regarded as a central source which helps us to understand and predict the behavior of individuals. However, some theorists argued that including behavior in the definition is equivalent to building a theory of attitude –behavior relations within a definition of a construct (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

2. EFL Learners

Learning is a process of arranging conditions under which the learner directs it towards his own goals. It is based on the interaction between both the learner and the instructor.

Setiyadi (2006, p. 58) stated that learning is the process of changing in mental and physical behavior induced in a living organism. So, knowledge is needed to solve everyday`s situations (Lenggono,2019).

According to Gebhard (2006), EFL can be defined as study of English by people who live in places in which English is not their first language. He further stated that in such a setting, the students have few chances to be exposed to English for communication outside the classroom because English is not used in daily life situations (Lenggono,2019).

Harmer (2007) defined EFL as the teaching of English where the students are studying English in their own country or are involved in short courses conducted in English (Lenggono,2019).

A similar definition was given by Camenson (2007) who suggested that EFL students may live in a country where their own Language is primarily spoken for communication, and that these students may be required to learn English for their

academic studies, for travelling activities to an English-speaking country or for business purposes. He also stated that EFL students only pass few hours weekly studying English, have little exposure to English outside the classroom, and little opportunity to practice the new acquired language skills and have a native background in the classroom (Lenggono,2019).

To conclude, EFL is the study of English by non-native speakers who live in another country. EFL learners can be taught by native or non-native speakers of English (Santoso, 2010).

EFL learners use English for communication, business, or travelling simply because their mother tongue serve/ fit in the context or the setting of the target language community (Lenggono,2019).

3. Impact of Distance Learning on Learners' Attitudes

The rapid growth of technology as an educational device is affected by students' attitudes and their potential to use these technologies successfully in the learning process. Thus, learners' attitude towards DL is very important to determine whether the use of technology is regarded as an improvement tool or change in the learning experience. And, learners' attitude is a good indicator of how knowledge is perceived. Research about this topic is very small, and an available study indicates both positive and negative attitudes. Some assume that that DL creates a greater flexibility than traditional classrooms though it limits the face to face interaction. It also improves interaction and access to the learning materials, and thus the students' convenience increase. Among the negative attitudes of Ls towards DL, we can mention the problems faced by the students while using the Internet and the different technological materials which may cause frustration (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005).

Chapter One: Theoretical Part

Section Three: EFL Learners Readiness for Autonomy under Distant Learning

The process of learning is a continuous process throughout a person's life; as a result, people should be motivated and develop new methods and techniques to enhance their intellectual level. The primary role of learners is to foster their autonomy and depend less on the instructors by being actively engaged in their learning progress. In this respect, learners' autonomy becomes a basic concept in modern education in which the interest has shifted from the teacher to the learner who is supposed to direct himself and be responsible for his own learning.

The present section defines the concept of autonomy according to different researchers. It also discusses learners' autonomy and the various approaches that promote autonomous learning in languages. The section is concluded with the benefits of autonomous learning and its relation with distant learning.

1. Definition of Autonomy

Autonomy is the state of existing or acting separately from others .i.e. independence (Taylor , 2017).The term is traced back to ancient Greek words 'autos' , meaning 'self' , and 'nomos' , meaning 'rule'.



Figure 2: *Origin of the Word Autonomy*

Autonomy, according to western ethics and political philosophy, is the ability of self-governance or taking leadership of one's life due to authentic reasons and desires or even some social and cultural values. It is about having the power and right to take charge of one self .i.e. being fully free and independent in taking decisions (Taylor, 2017).

The most two influential theories of autonomy goes back to the 18th and 19th centuries in the philosophies of both Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill. For Kant, a person is meant to be autonomous only if his decisions and choices are not influenced by external factors and effects which mean the person is open up to change (Taylor, 2017).

According to Mill, a person is autonomous when he directs his actions in relation to his own values and desires. In contrast to Kant, Mill maintains that autonomous people are motivated by their own desires and not necessarily from external factors (Taylor, 2017).

The notion of autonomy is further discussed in the report of Holec. He begins his highly influential work with the following introduction: "The desire to increase the individual's freedom by developing those abilities which will allow him to act more responsibly in running the affairs of the society in which he lives." (Holec 1981 , p.1).

For Holec (1981), autonomy is not limited only to the field of education; instead it tackles other aspects of human life. He describes autonomy as “the ability to take charge of ... (his or her) own learning.” (p. 3), which means having a say and taking responsibility in the process of learning and this can be better achieved by:

- Stating clearly the objectives to be attained;
- Selecting the content to be studied;
- Determining the different techniques and methods to be used;
- Self-monitoring and constant evaluation.

According to Little (1991), autonomy is the capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned. It is about developing independency from others’ control and guidance, in this case instruction. In other words, autonomy is the process of practicing freedom in language acquisition, but with barriers and constrains.

The definition of autonomy turns out to be a controversial concept. There is no clear and final definition for the term. But, autonomy has a strong relation with motivation in which the learning process is enhanced. And, the common aspect is that autonomy is the ability of the learner to take his own responsibility while acquiring a language.

2. Learners’ Autonomy

Learners’ autonomy becomes a fundamental topic in the field of foreign language education. This concept has become very influential in recent years. It can be referred to as learner independence, self-direction, and independent learning. The terms are often used interchangeably. Learners’ autonomy is set to have a direct relation to learners’ responsibility and motivation.

Thanasoulas (2000) illustrates that:

It is noteworthy that autonomy can be thought of in terms of a departure from education as a social process, as well as in terms of redistribution of power attending the construction of knowledge and the roles of the participants in the learning process (as cited in Yagcioglu, 2015, p. 429).

According to Thanasoulas (2000), learners take part in identifying their learning objectives, and what they need to know as a result of instruction. They have to select the learning styles and strategies, so that they can be more motivated and engaged in the learning process. Learners can also evaluate what has been learned, so that they organize their learning on well-founded concepts that meet their skills (as cited in Yagcioglu, 2015).

For Thanasoulas (2000), learners' autonomy is thought to be a social process in which participants take turn in redistributing the power of attending the construction of knowledge (as cited in Yagcioglu, 2015).

It has also been mentioned by Little (1991):

Learner autonomy is a problematic term because it is widely confused with self-instruction. It is also a slippery concept because it is notoriously difficult to define precisely. The rapidly expanding literature has debated, for example, whether learner autonomy should be thought of as capacity or behavior; whether it is characterized by learner responsibility or learner control; whether it is a psychological phenomenon with political implications or a political right with psychological implications; and whether the development of learner autonomy depends on a complementary teacher autonomy (as cited in Yagcioglu, 2015, p. 429).

Learners' autonomy is still a debatable topic. Many researchers are indecisive whether learners' autonomy is regarded as a capacity or a behavior. For some, it is characterized by learners' responsibility, and others believe that learners' autonomy is controlled by the learner.

3. Autonomous Learning

The notion of autonomous learning and independent learning are often used interchangeably. Holec (1981), states that autonomous learning is a dual process of knowledge construction. It is a matter of what and how learners learn the foreign language .i.e. the content and the way of language acquisition. His definition supports the idea of freedom of applying the knowledge acquired outside the immediate context of learning. As a result, autonomous learning is a constant developmental process of language acquisition that extends beyond the school context. Also, Dickinson (1994) relates independence with being responsible for one's learning; whereas, he associates autonomy with the concept of learning alone (Holec,1981).

There are three basic pedagogical principles that underline autonomy in language learning according to Holec (1981):

-Learners 'involvement: learners are responsible for their learning by being active and engaged; they interact and participate in the process.

-Learners' reflection: as a result of instruction, learners can evaluate themselves and develop their critical thinking to enhance their autonomy.

-Adequate use of target language: the language used is the basis for the learning process through which the learner communicates appropriately.

Holec (1981), Allwright (1990) and Little (1991) agreed that autonomous learning has to do with:

- Being responsible in selecting the objectives and goals of the study.
- Selecting the content and defining its way of progression.
- Organizing and sequencing the order of the syllabus according to the needs.
- Selecting the adequate materials to be used.
- Being motivated intrinsically and extrinsically.
- Willingness to share the acquired knowledge.
- Acceptance of different changes concerning the approaches of learning.
- Self-evaluation about what has been learned.

(Little, 1991)

4. Approaches to Promoting Autonomous Languages Learning

The field of education has shifted from old approaches to communicative ones .As a result, the work of both teacher and learner has changed. The new distribution of roles focuses more on the learners' active engagement. In this respect, there should be a promotion in learners' autonomy to encourage them to be more responsible for their own learning (Oussou, 2020)

According to Benson (2011), learning autonomy is successfully developed and fostered with the learner's desire and will to adopt new learning methods instead of past dominant ones. In his work, he introduces six important approaches; the combination of which leads to the promotion of autonomy in learning (Oussou, 2020).

-Resource-based approaches include self-instruction and self-access. According to Benson (2011), it is any interaction between the learners and any type of resource or material while being engaged in the learning environment.

-Technology-based approaches are an alliance between learners' autonomy and the use of CALL. It highlights the independent use of technological materials while learning. Technology has become an integral part of self-access (Benson, 2011).

-Learner-based approaches consists of the cognitive and affective development of the individual's skills and capacities that increase the willingness to organize one's own learning.

-Classroom-based approaches deal with the management of the learning process inside the classroom where the teacher and learner have different roles to play. In this context, learners are more responsible and take charge of their own instruction.

-Curriculum-based approaches emphasize the contribution of learners in selecting the content of the syllabus that better fit their needs.

-Teacher-based approaches states that the teacher's primarily role is to promote learners' autonomy. His role is minimized to a mediator between the content and the student.(Oussou, 2020)

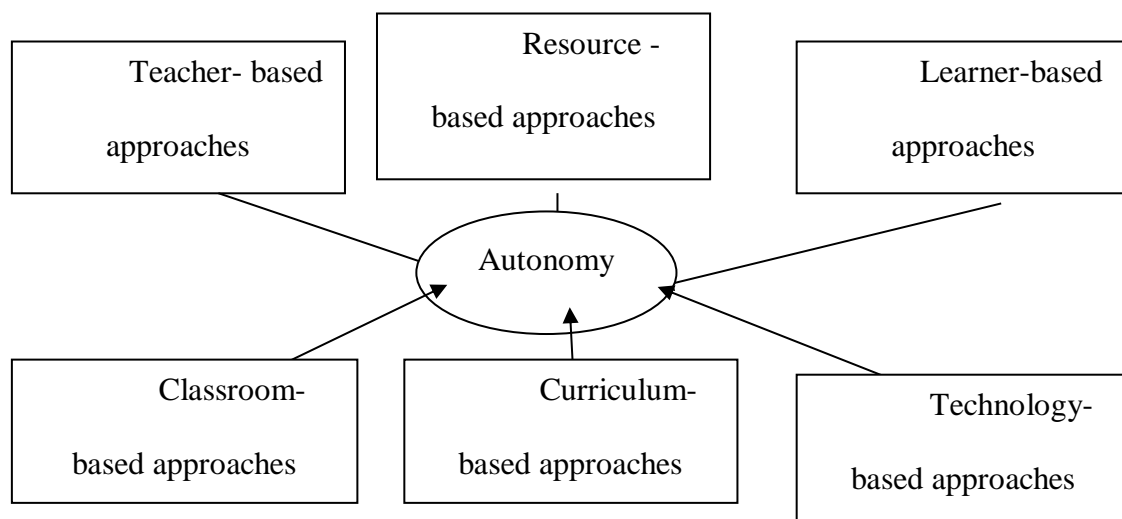


Figure 3 : Autonomy in language Learning (Benson, 2001, p.112)

5. Benefits of Autonomous Learning

Autonomous learning benefits both the students and instructor. The teacher becomes a mediator between the content to be studied and the learner. Thus, his role is minimized to a guide or facilitator.

Jiao (2005, p.28) comes up with the four significant reasons that better support learners to enhance their autonomy;

-It fosters the learners' motivation and makes them actively engaged. As a result, learners are exposed to a more effective instruction in which they feel free in expressing their opinions in a respected manner.

-LA facilitates the communication using the target language inside and outside a learning context in a non-native environment.

-LA meets the individuals' needs to develop themselves at all levels of educational progression.

-It has a long term affect through which learners transfer their capabilities to all areas of their life and have a share in the growth of society.

(as cited in Pentila, 2021)

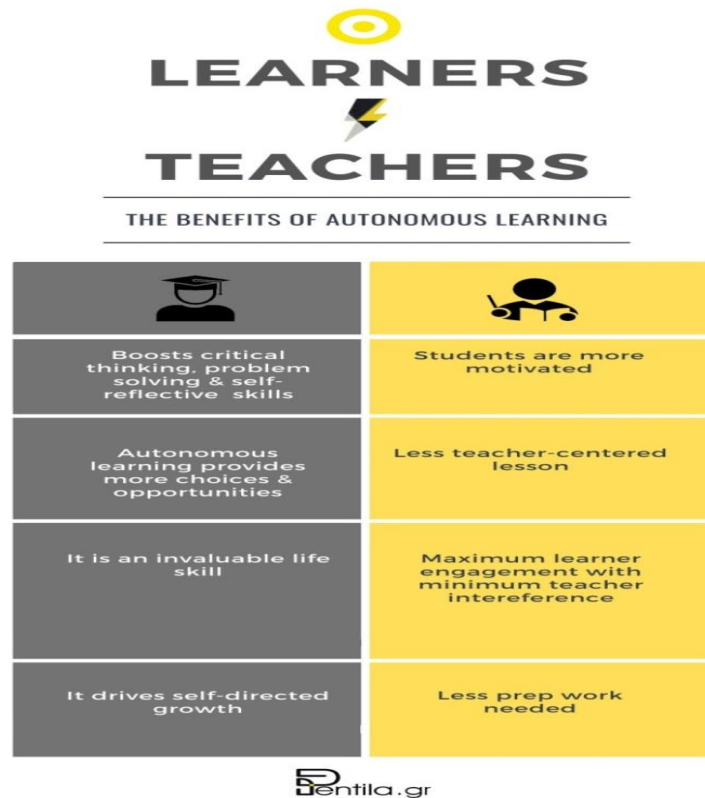


Figure 4 : Benefits of Autonomy

6. Relationship between Autonomy and Distant Learning

There is a clear association between autonomy and distant learning in Moore's theory of transactional distant (1972; 1973; 1997; 2007). This theory is considered as one of the most crucial theories in DL. It contains three main variables; dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy. According to Moore, dialogue refers to the interaction between student and tutor. Structure is defined as the context of syllabus and its flexibility. For him, learners' autonomy is the learners' ability to control and organize their own learning .i.e. the learner capacity to manage their learning plans and make decisions with full responsibility (Falloon, 2011).

In distant learning, autonomous learners' main role is to be motivated and determined in selecting their goals and learning materials and resources that better facilitate the process.

Conclusion

In distant learning, it is important for students to acquire new strategies and techniques that enable them to enhance their learning progress. Meanwhile, the teacher's role is minimized to give guidance, support, and encouragement to build a knowledge that fit the learners. Thus, DL contributes to the success of the course as well as the development of autonomy.

Chapter Two: Fieldwork

Introduction

This chapter will answer the following research questions by collecting data from a questionnaire administered to EFL students. Thus, this chapter will include the questionnaire, its description and structure, followed by a deep analysis to each question separately, as well as a discussion of the significant notions extracted from the questionnaire drawing its way to the conclusion as the final result.

So, this is a restatement of the research questions:

- 1/ What are the perceptions of EFL learners towards distant learning?
- 2/ What are the perceptions of EFL learners towards the impact of distant learning on learners' readiness for autonomy?

1. Instruments

To answer these research questions, one data collection tool was selected which is the questionnaire. The latter is an effective instrument that gathers adequate and accurate information in a descriptive type of study. It is the easiest tool that allows to collect data in a short period of time from a large population.

2. Participants

This questionnaire targeted Master 2 students (96) at the department of English at the University Center of Mila with a sample of 36 participants i.e. approximately one-third of the whole population.

3. Methodology

This descriptive study aims to collect data and investigate the answers of the research questions via a quantitative and qualitative tool which is the questionnaire.

4. Students Questionnaire

36 questionnaires were sent to EFL Master 2 students at the department of English at Mila's University Center via Google forms.

4.1. Description and Structure of Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of three (3) sections. The first section is devoted to the background information: their gender, age, EFL learning experience and level. The second section investigates EFL learners' perceptions towards distance education with

11 questions. The third and the last section deals with the impact of distant learning on EFL learners' readiness for autonomy with 7 questions. In all the three sections, only closed-ended questions and some questions that have the possibility to add one more option were used. This type of questions is easily administered, quantifiable (measurable) and provides pre-selected list of options for the respondents who prefer this type over the open-ended questions in which they are obliged to write further explanations. The 22 questions were distributed as follow:

Table 1 : Distribution of the Questions in each Section

Section	Section1	Section2	Section3
Questions Type	Background Information	Perceptions of EFL Learners Towards Distant Learning / Distance Education	The Impact of Distant Learning on EFL Learners' Readiness for Autonomy
Number of Questions (22)	4	11	7

4.2. Analysis of Students' Questionnaire

As the above table manifests, each question is going to be detailed and carefully analyzed in the following part. Also, the results are illustrated in graphs.

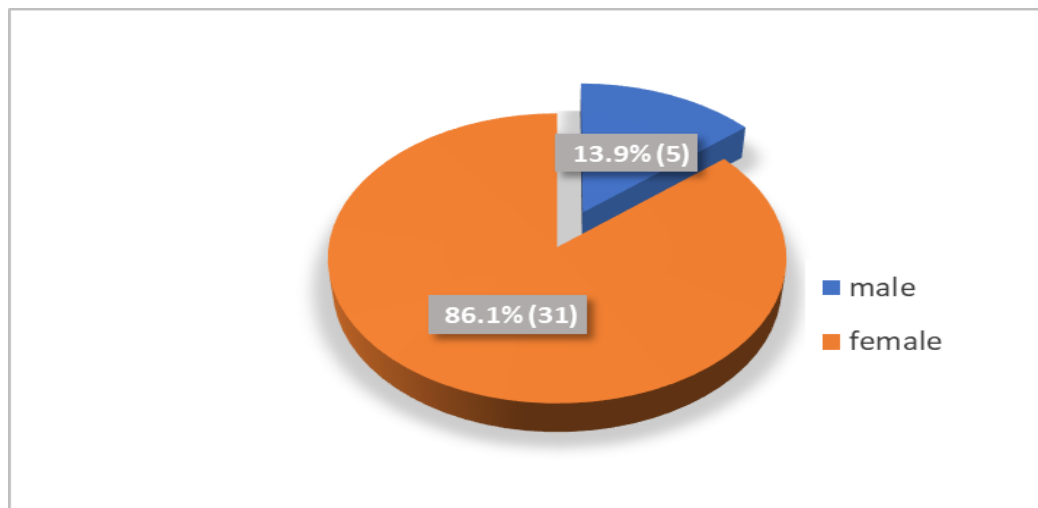
A/ Participants' Characteristics:

Section One: Background Information:

In this section, basic information about the participants were gathered including their age, gender, level and experience in EFL.

1. Learners' Gender:

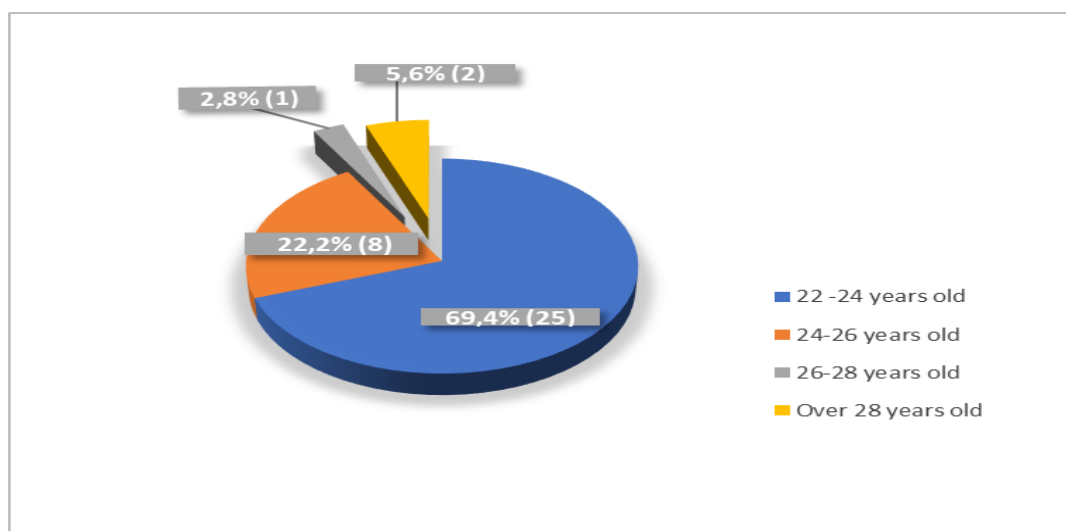
Among the participants, (13.9%) were males who represented the minority. The graph below demonstrates the result.



Graph 1 : Distribution of the Questions in each Section

2. Learners' Age

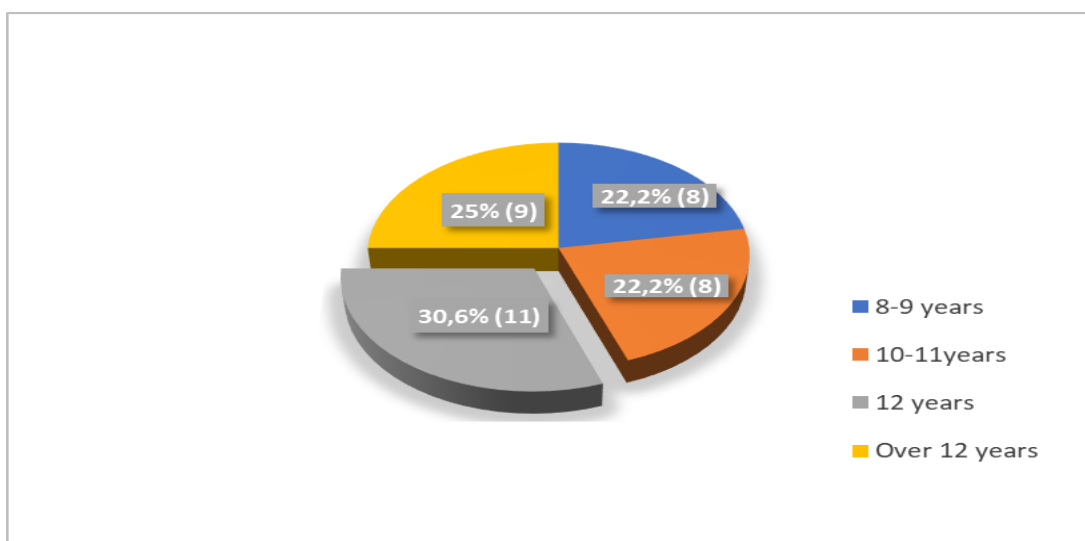
Among the 36 participants, (69.4%) learners had their age between 22 to 24 years old that represented the majority, (22.2%) learners' age ranged between 24 to 26 years old. While, one (2.8%) had his age from 26 to 28, two (5.6%) were over 28 years old. The graph below shows them in details.



Graph 2: Learners' Age

3. Learners' Experience

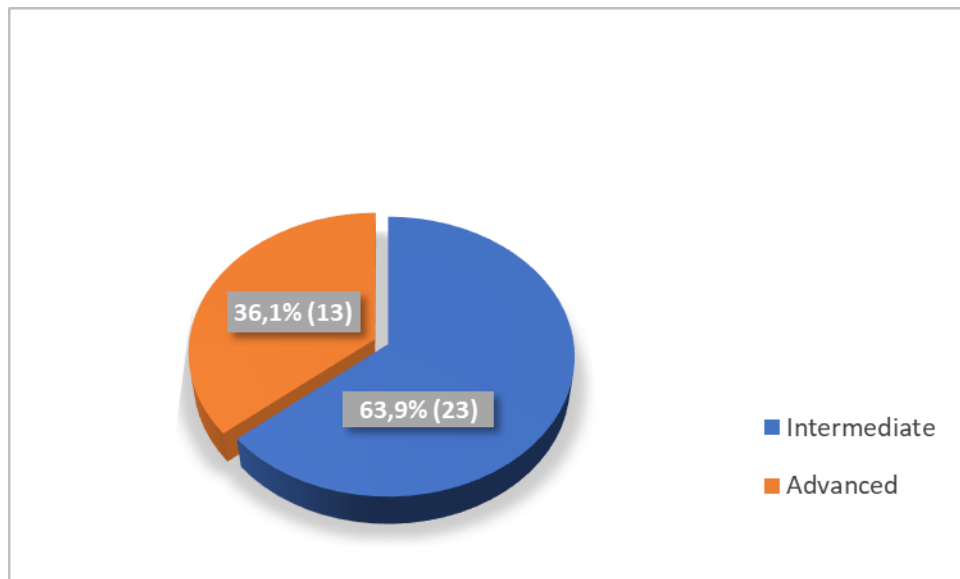
The majority of learners (30.6%) had 12 years of experience in learning English as a foreign language. Around (25%) participants had been studying English from 10 to 11 years. About (22.2%) of students had been learning the language for 8 years to 9 years, and an identical percentage of students (22.2%) had the experience of over 12 years in EFL as outlined in the following graph:



Graph 3 : Learners' Experience

4. Learners' EFL Level

The majority of students (63.9%) had an intermediate level in EFL while (36.1%) of them had an advanced level, and this is quite normal since they are all specialized in English as their study branch at university. Graph 4 displays the data.



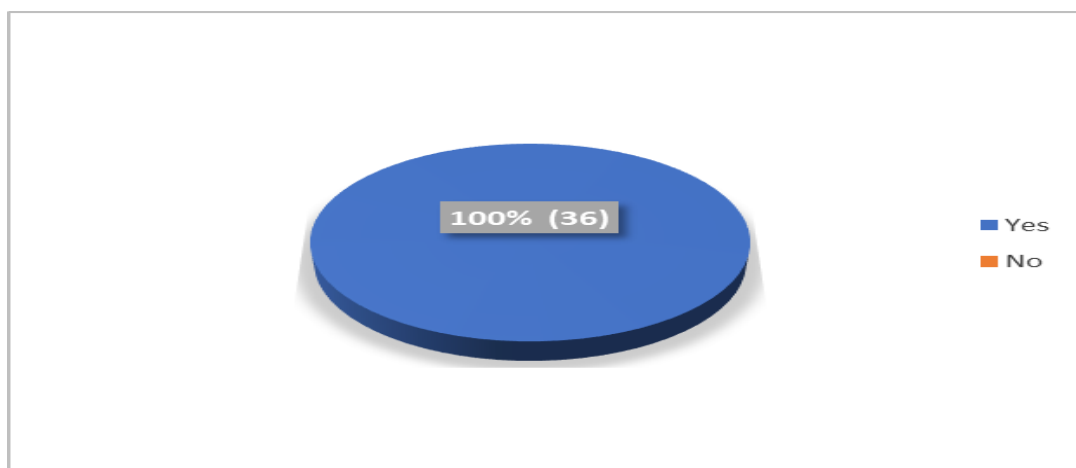
Graph 4: Learners' EFL Level

B/ Section Two: Perceptions of EFL Learners' towards Distant Learning / Distance Education

The second section of the questionnaire is crucial because it is dedicated to answer the first research question about the perceptions of EFL learners towards distant learning. Thirty-six (36) participants were asked about the availability of Internet connection, the frequency of its use by learners while studying English and the device used in their learning process. They were also given the chance to choose the type of learning they prefer the most. Furthermore, this part of the questionnaire deals with some interrelated aspects of the implementation of distant learning in EFL classes like the suggested online materials by teachers to be used in learning, and whether the use of such fosters learners' motivation, the reasons why some students prefer distant learning and the challenges encountered in the way. The last two questions discuss the effectiveness of distant learning and the possibility of its total invasion on the educational world according to the students' opinions.

Q1/ Do you have access to the Internet?

Since the Internet has become one of the global means of communication due to its large utility, all participants (100%) had access to net which is something expected from “Internet Kids”. Also, because they live in places that offer the Internet services at home, at University, at Cyber café or anywhere. The results are shown in the following graph:



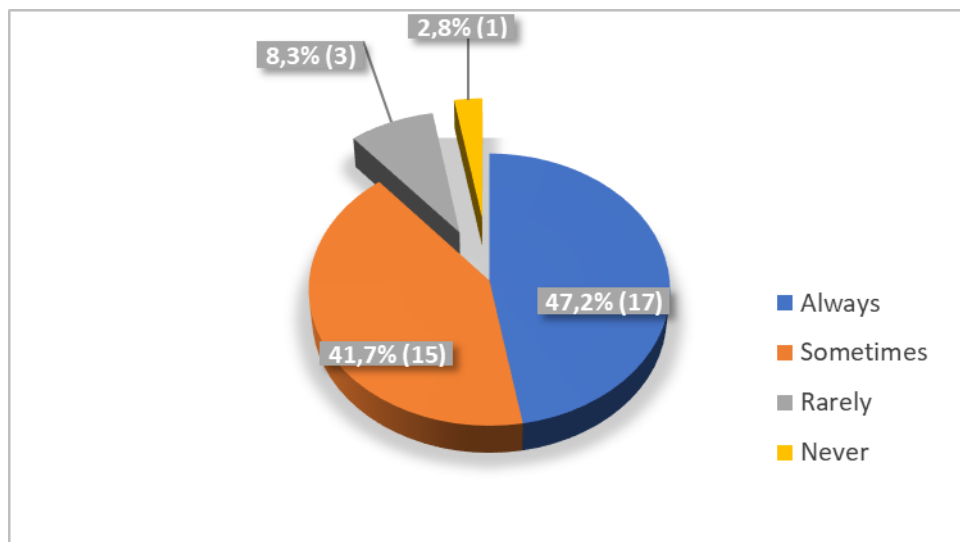
Graph 5: Access to the Internet

Q2/ How often do you use the internet to study English?

It is universally acknowledged that Internet has become a necessity, has many utilities and that people became addicted to using it, but what about using it to study English? When participants have been questioned about the frequency of their Internet usage to study English, (47, 2%) students have always used the internet to learn while (41, 7%) of the students have sometimes used the internet. However, (8,3%) respondents said that they rarely use the internet, and there is an exception of one individual who admitted that he had never used the internet to learn English. The responses are distributed in graph 6.

The low-frequency of Internet usage to learn this language was due to the poor skills of technology use by EFL learners, limited-time access to Network connection , or because they preferred traditional / ordinary tools like reading tangible books,

articles and dictionaries or by watching TV. The majority of the participants revealed their heavy or medium use of the Net to learn English because it offered a whole learning environment: watching videos that teach English on YouTube and movies with Arabic or English subtitles on websites, reading electronic books and articles, playing educational games, downloading learning applications and searching about different information on search engines like Google. All the previously mentioned services are beneficial and helpful to the EFL learners since it allows them to learn at any time, in any place and with whatever pace of learning they decide to have.

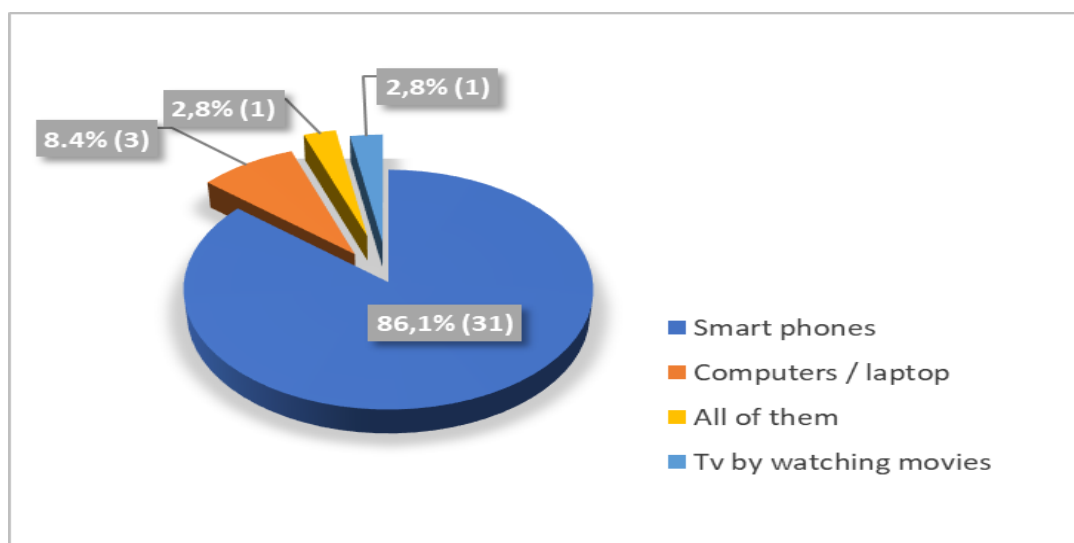


Graph 6: Frequency of Using the Net to Study English

Q3/ What is the device that you use while learning, if ever?

To learn English, learners used different types of devices. According to their answers, the most useful tool was the smart phone since most of them, (86,1%) respondents, used it. Smart phones are small devices that can be held anywhere and everywhere with endless valuable options, like the easy access to information and applications. Also, they have the ability to connect individuals to the whole world with Wi-Fi, 3G or 4G services just like computers/ laptop which only three students (8,3%) opted for. The computer has similar advantages to the phones but with a larger screen

and further options. Yet, unlike phones, computers are neither practical nor affordable to everyone especially for the budget of a student. One of the participants (2,8%) used the two previously mentioned devices in addition to the tablet. This individual used any device he can get his hands on to study English, so he did not focus on the mean but rather on the purpose. Finally, one respondent added another device that is TV which does not require an access to the Net, and he added a comment that he used it to see English movies. The graph below shows the exact statistics:

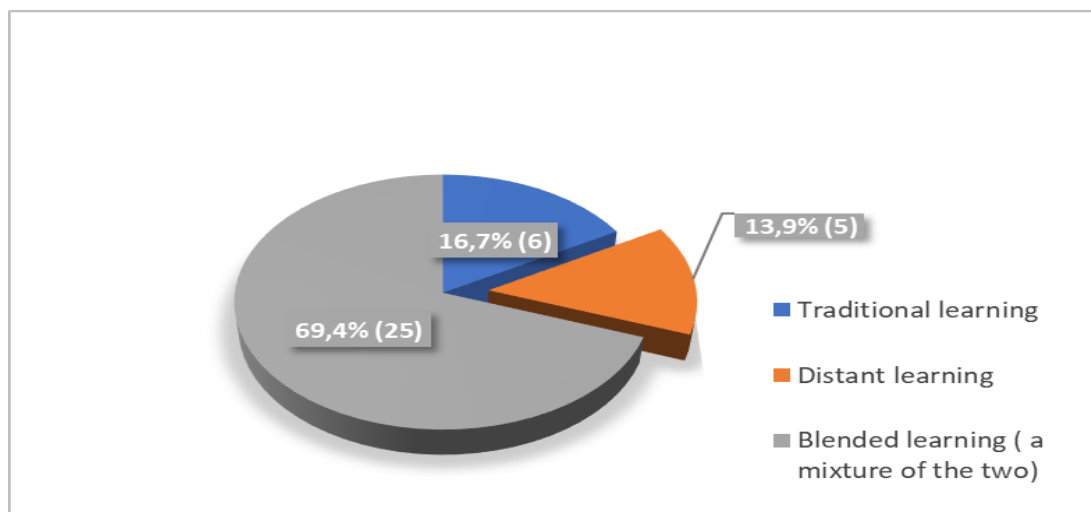


Graph 7: Device Used for Learning

Q4/ If you were given the choice to be exposed to the following types of learning, which one would you opt for? (Traditional learning, distant learning, blended learning (a mixture of the two)).

Due to the pandemic, the participants who represent a sample from Master 2 students (2021-2022) have been exposed to different types of learning. Thus, it is high time we asked them which one suits them better. Around (16,7%) students still preferred traditional classroom instruction which requires full-time attendance because of the following reasons: They were not able to use technology and preferred to use old methods; they liked real life communication, or they were not satisfied with the way

distant learning was applied during the pandemic , and with how e-materials were integrated. About (13,9 %) students opted for distant learning owing to its low cost and its flexibility that fits those students who had full time-jobs or families. Furthermore, there are introvert students who lack social skills, or just because they like using technology. However, the majority of students (69,4%) went with the choice of blended learning considering the fact that they will have less classes in real life, and hence they can do something else while they have online classes. ICTs are used to provide further support and explanation, and where Flipped Approach (in which students are introduced to content at home and practice through it at schools- Arnold-Garza's article-2014) are also implemented. The statistics are apparent in the following graph:

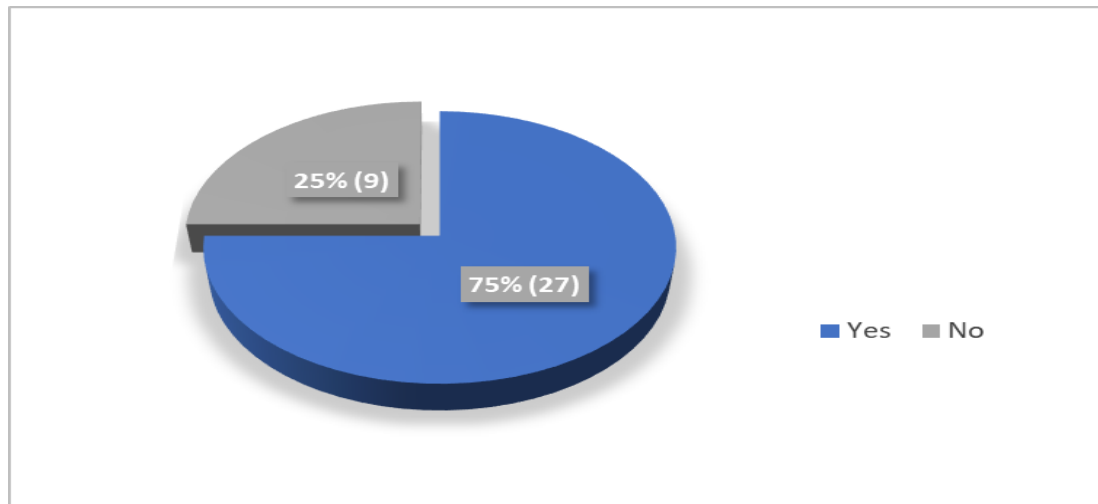


Graph 8: Favorite Type of Learning

Q5/ Do your teachers suggest online courses, e-books, videos, websites... for your learning?

The majority of students (75%) reported that their teachers suggested e-materials for their learning such as e-books, online courses, videos and websites, and the minority (25%) said that they did not. From one hand, this is an attempt from teachers to integrate technology and e-learning to their students' learning. Also, teachers think it is beneficial in terms of expanding learners' knowledge and

understanding of the lectures. Moreover, it teaches students to be self-educated and independent. On the other hand, those teachers who do not suggest e-learning for their students have poor ICTs skills and prefer traditional methods like reading books and classroom discussions. The responses to this question are manifested as follow:

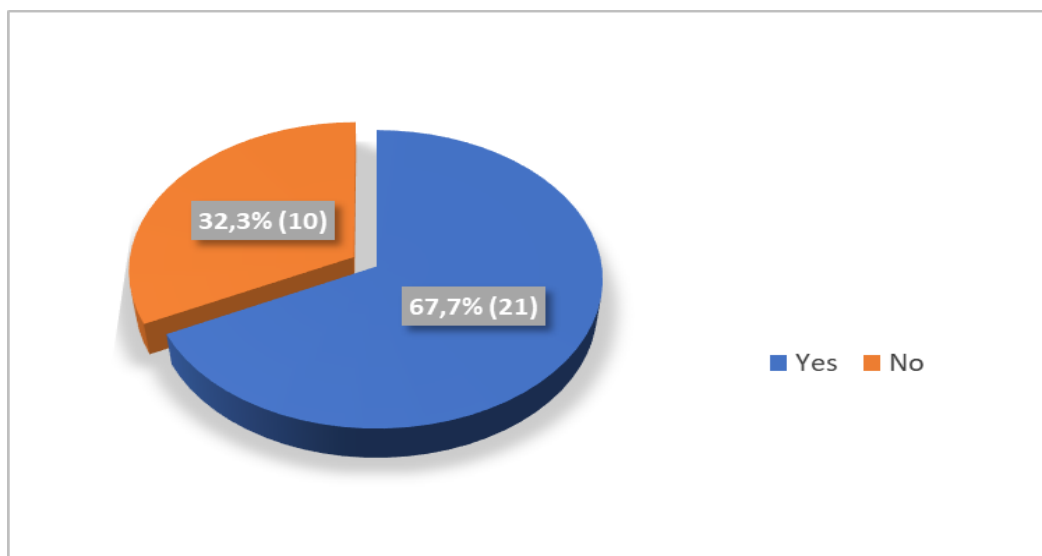


Graph 9: Teachers' Suggestions to Use Electronic Resources

Q6/ If yes, do you get motivated when they do so?

Though most tutors suggest online resources -shown in the previous question (Q5), not all the students get motivated by the use of these technological materials in their studies, yet (67.7%) participants did get motivated. In this case, motivation increases among students since they represent the Internet generation who likes getting their fingers on anything related to technology. Each student had a varied learning style; for instance, audio-visual learners adore watching videos on YouTube to illustrate the content dealt with in the class. Also, audio learners enjoy listening to podcasts to gain new vocabulary and to open up to different perceptions of people about the discussed topic. In the other case, students who did not get motivated when using ICTs are either aged or they use technology only for entertainment. That is why; it is teachers' responsibility to be selective when choosing those e-materials. Hence, the latter should be interesting and enjoyable to watch, read or listen to, not too short with skimpy data

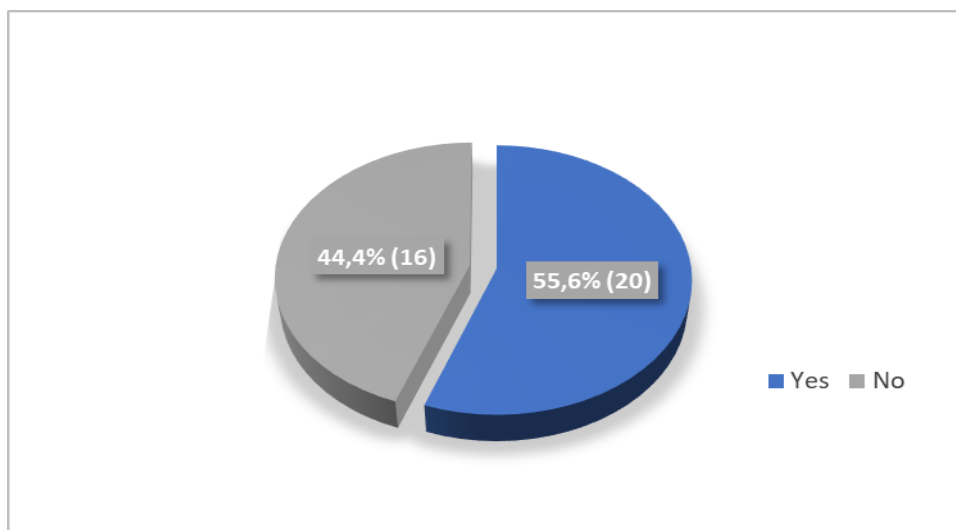
nor too long which creates boredom to the students, and they must suit their language level. The answers are divided into “Yes” or “No” as follow:



Graph 10: Motivation to Use Electronic Materials

Q7/ Do you prefer learning from a distance?

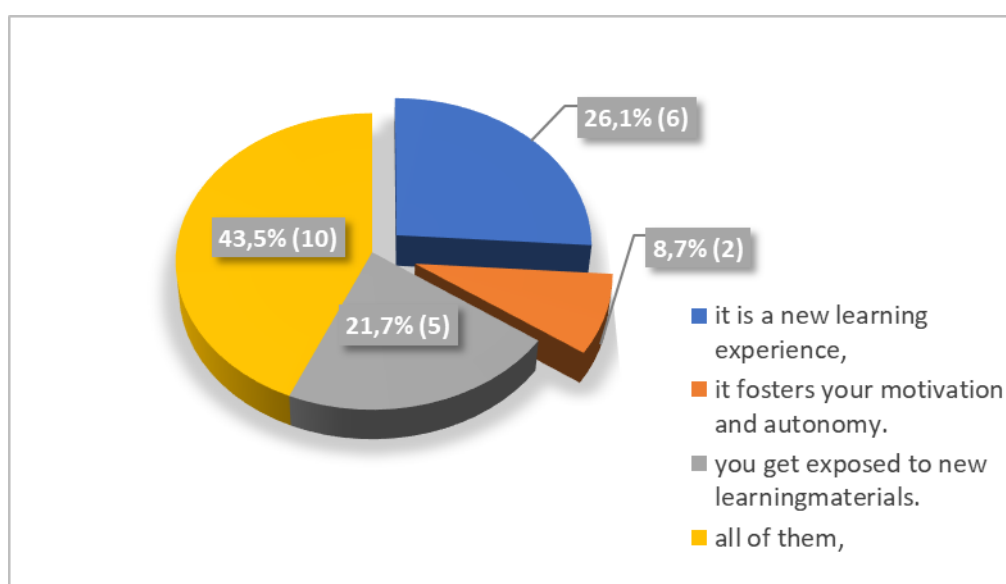
Although participants were already asked about which type of learning they prefer in question 4, they were asked again if they like learning from a distance in order to focus more on the reasons behind their choice, so this question just paved the way to the next one (Q8). Among 36 participants , (55, 6%) answered with ”yes” while (44,4%), ” said” no” as shown in graph11. And, as discussed earlier, it is due to its countless advantages.



Graph 11: Favoring Distant Learning

Q8/ If yes because:(Reasons why distant learning is preferable)

Question 7 leads to this one; it provides a list of reasons why distant learning is preferable. The first reason on the list was “it is a new learning experience” with (26.1%) responses. Though distant learning is no new approach, it was applied universally for the first time during the pandemic. And, they are open up to new adventures and feel excited to try a new learning type other than the classical method. The second reason which was “it fosters learners’ motivation and autonomy” got only a low percentage (8,7%). Some learners favored being in charge of their learning to feel more responsible and engaged in the process. As a result, their motivation is increased and their autonomy is fostered, and they come up with new strategies and techniques to enhance their intellectual level. The third and the last given reason was “they get exposed to new learning materials” with (21,7%) responses . This is because students get bored easily, and they are always ready to test new materials especially with ICTs. Eventually, (43,5%) of the participants opted for all the three reasons, and none added another reason though we have plenty. The graph below shows the reported statistics:

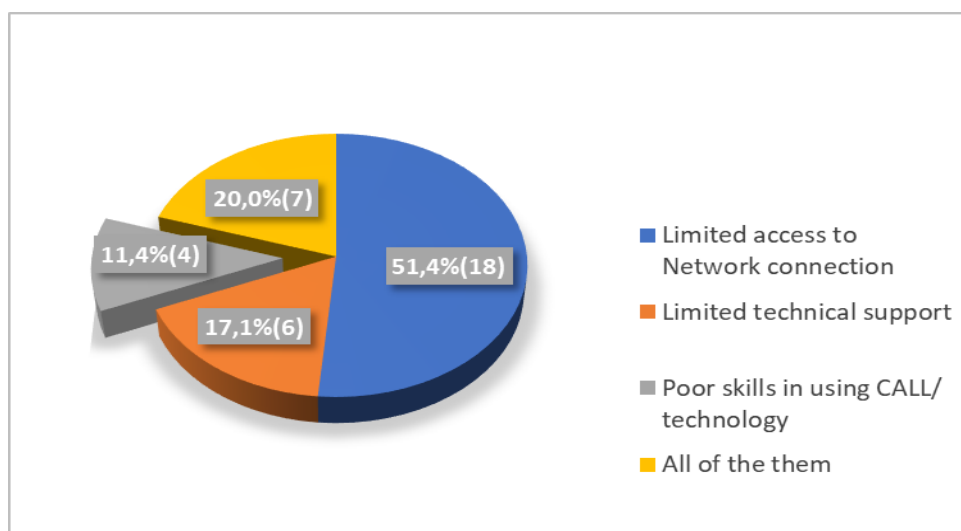


Graph 12: Reasons Why Distant Learning is Preferable

Q9/ What are the challenges that you encounter while using the Internet in your learning process?

Real implementation of distance education has been proven to be both successful and fruitful. This is the reason why, most people prefer to adopt it over the other learning types. Coming to the Algerian context, students face many challenges especially in terms of Internet usage. Participants were asked about that and were given a list of challenges to choose from. About half of the population (51,4%) opted for the option of “limited access to Network connection”; whereas, the other (48,6%) were divided as follow: About (17,1%) responses opted for” limited technical support”, (11,4%) selected “poor skills in using CALL/ technology” ,and (20%) who stated that they encountered all the mentioned challenges. All the statistics are represented in graph 13. There was only one who did not answer the question.

Suffering from poor Internet connection is not a hidden issue in Algeria. Next, there are many teachers and students alike who confront obstacles with e-materials whether uploading or downloading lectures or even logging in sites which should be met by a technical support from the University (specialists and CALL teachers).



Graph 13: Challenges of Using the Internet to Learn

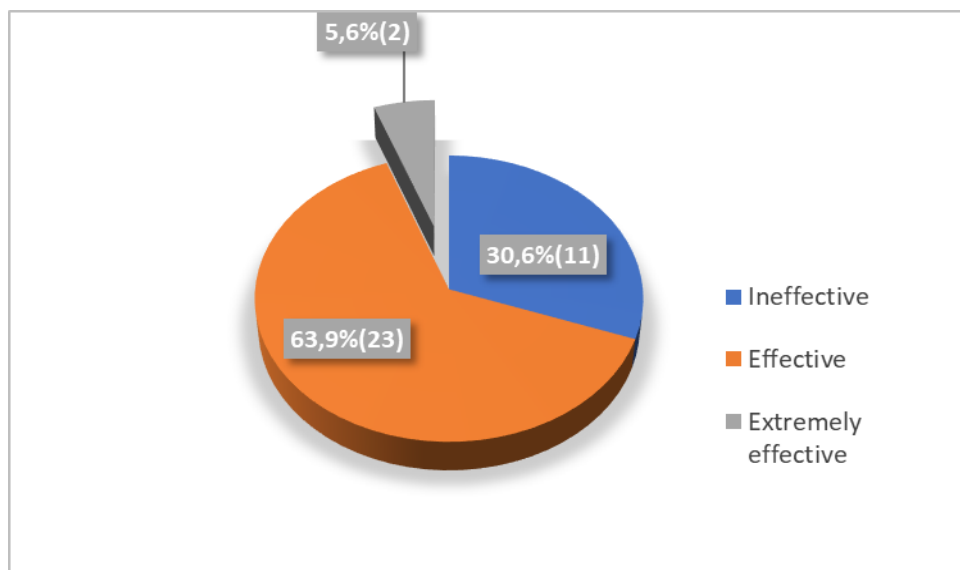
Q10/ In comparison to traditional learning environment, do you think that distant learning is?

In comparison to traditional classroom environment, distant learning is regarded as a new method and a change in the learning experience. Thus, learners' opinions are a hint of how distant learning is perceived. In this vein, it is about time we asked participants to make this hard comparison between the two learning types on the basis of which they rate the effectiveness of distant learning. The majority of the population, (60%) believed that distant learning is effective; (5.6%) of them highlighted its extreme effectiveness, and the rest, (30,6%) thought it is ineffective. The statistics are outlined in graph14.

On one hand, those who claimed its infectiveness had encountered some challenges. Some students preferred having face to face communication, so it is hard for them to do it virtually, and others had inequitable access to the Net which is a must to log in the courses. Distant learning causes social isolation and lack of collaboration. It also requires strong self-motivation and independency which some students are not ready to develop. In addition to these challenges, those who did not acknowledge the effectiveness of distant learning had a bad experience with it and created misconception about its real application. What is more is that some of them had never logged in to the e-learning sites, and they just bring lessons from their classmates, so technically they did not have even an experience to judge upon.

On the other hand, distant learning is regarded as an effective method that is not very different from the traditional one as both achieve the target goal set for a certain course and have a successful learning process. Distant learning gives busy students a flexible schedule and supplies them with diversity in teaching materials which makes

the process of learning more enjoyable and motivating. Furthermore, it develops their individual skills and teaches them to become autonomous.



Graph 14: *Effectiveness of Distant Learning in Comparison to Traditional*

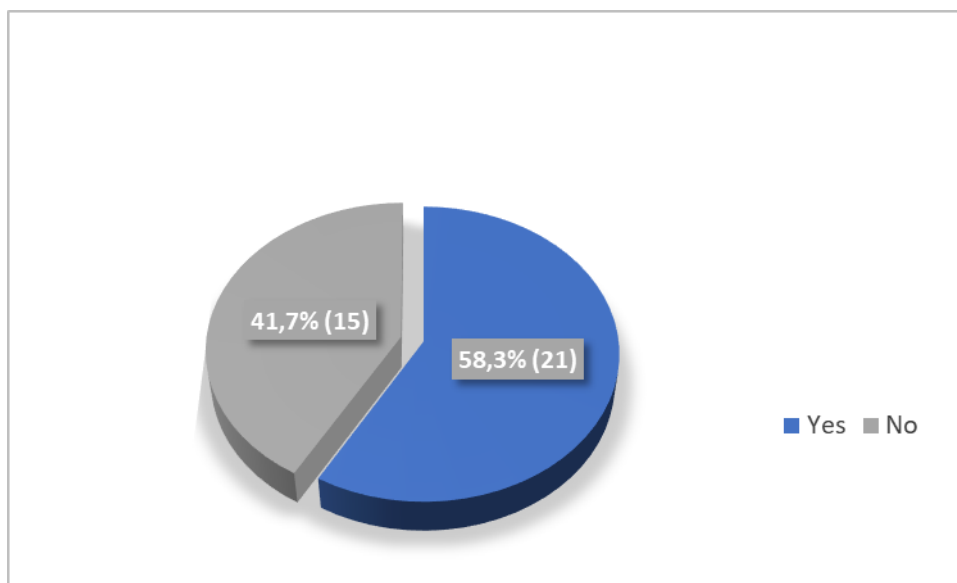
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Q11/ Do you think that distant learning will replace traditional classrooms in the future?

Will distant learning replace traditional classroom in the future? This question turns out to be the debate of the time since many educational institutions started to adopt this kind of learning. Over half of the population, (58,3%) foresaw the fulfillment of this idea; whereas, (41,7%) students reckoned that distant learning can never replace traditional classrooms. Graph15 shows the results.

Technology takes over the world in all the domains which are becoming more dependent on it with time, so education is witnessing the same evolution. Thus in the future, there will no longer be real classes, yet everyone will have the opportunity to get an education and continue it even after having the first diploma. Nevertheless, even if virtual classes dominate the educational system, traditional ones will persist their

value for having unique characteristics that distant learning cannot offer such as social interaction and public speaking skills.



Graph 15: Possibility of Replacing Traditional Learning with Distant One

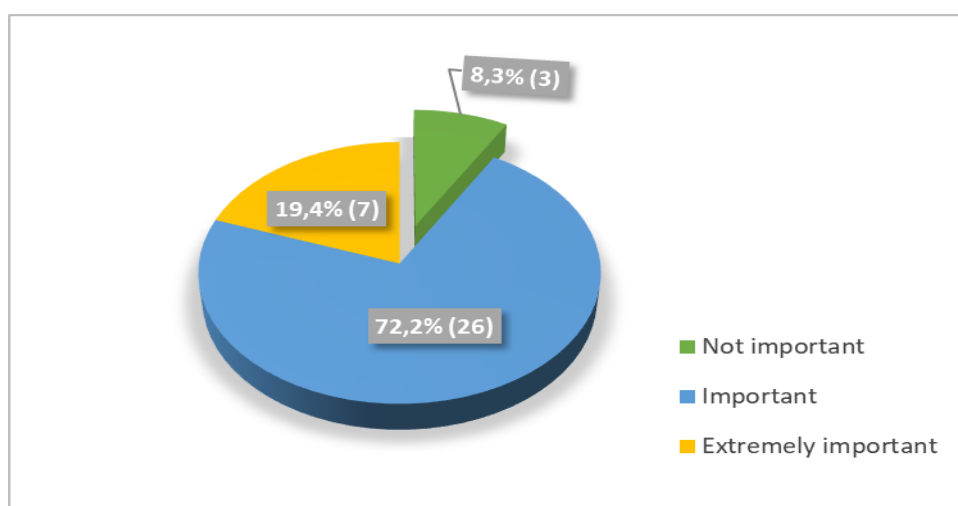
C/Section Three: The Impact of Distant Learning on EFL Learners' Readiness for Autonomy

The last section of the questionnaire is set to answer the second research question about the impact of distant learning on EFL learners' readiness for autonomy. Hence, our population sample was asked seven questions with a focus on the relation between distant learning and autonomy. The questions were about the importance of autonomy to EFL learners and the most useful factors that can develop this skill. Also, learners were asked about the influence of distant learning on lessening the teacher's role, enhancing their learning strategies and increasing motivation and engagement in the learning process. Finally, the last two questions of this section tried to see learners' opinion about the link between DL and autonomy and whether the latter is fostered in this type of learning in comparison to traditional one.

Q1/ Is it important for an EFL learner to be autonomous?

Question one of the third section aimed at exploring EFL learners' attitudes about the importance of autonomy for their learning. Among the 36 respondents, (72.2%) of them who represent over the half, highlighted the significance of being autonomous, and in the same track (19.4%) added emphasis to its importance – extremely important-. However, only three (8.3%) students neglected its importance. The results are manifested in graph16.

Autonomy is a major quality for an EFL learner because one cannot develop a language other than his native one with just limited hours of presented lectures. Thus, they have to make extra efforts to acquire the language properly. For those who said that learning a language does not necessitate being autonomous, their learning progress is definitely slow.

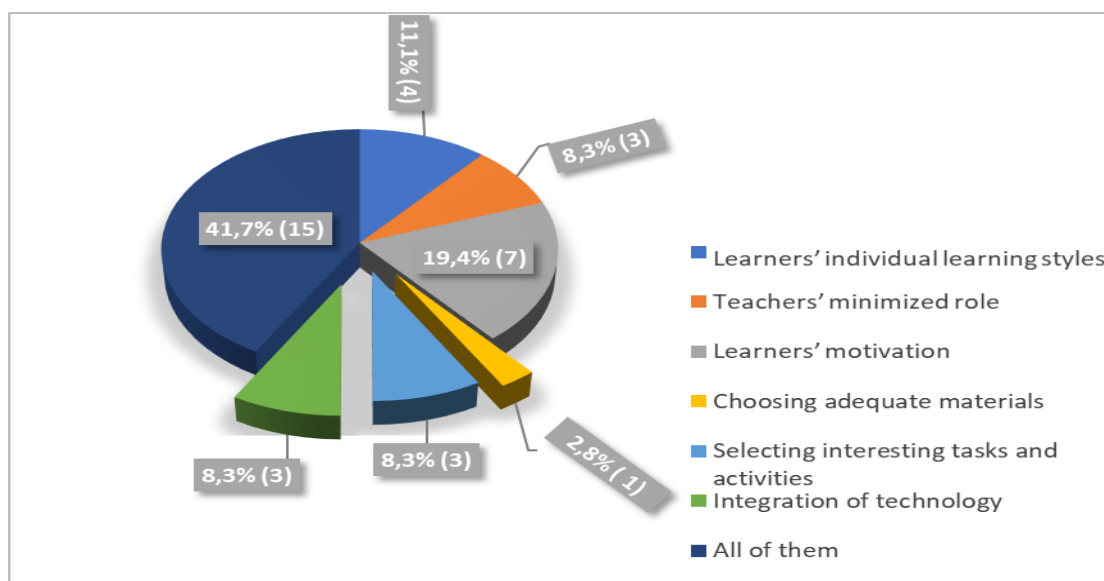


Graph 16: Importance of Being Autonomous for an EFL Learner

Q2/ what are the most beneficial learning factors that can foster your readiness for autonomy?

The purpose of this question is to investigate the most beneficial factor(s) that can foster learners' readiness for autonomy. Choosing these factors varied between participants. About (11.1%) participants focused on the idea of choosing their own learning style to foster autonomy. (8.3%) were sure that minimizing the role of the

teacher will, in contrast, maximize the role of learners. Around (19.4%) claimed that the most beneficial factor which enhances learners' readiness for autonomy is learners' motivation since the latter plays a fundamental role in building self-reliance. (8.3%) reckoned that the integration of technology is the most beneficial factor that serves as a facilitating and a supportive tool of learning, and the same percentage of participants (8.3%) - opted for the selection of interesting tasks and activities as they increase their desire to learn independently. Also, one student (2.8%) linked autonomy to the selection of adequate materials. Finally, about (41.7%) saw that all the previously mentioned factors are equally important and necessary for the fulfillment of autonomy (Graph 17). This question is still debatable since the students' opinions differ from one option to the other, but as a matter of fact all the above mentioned factors influence the development of learners' autonomy.

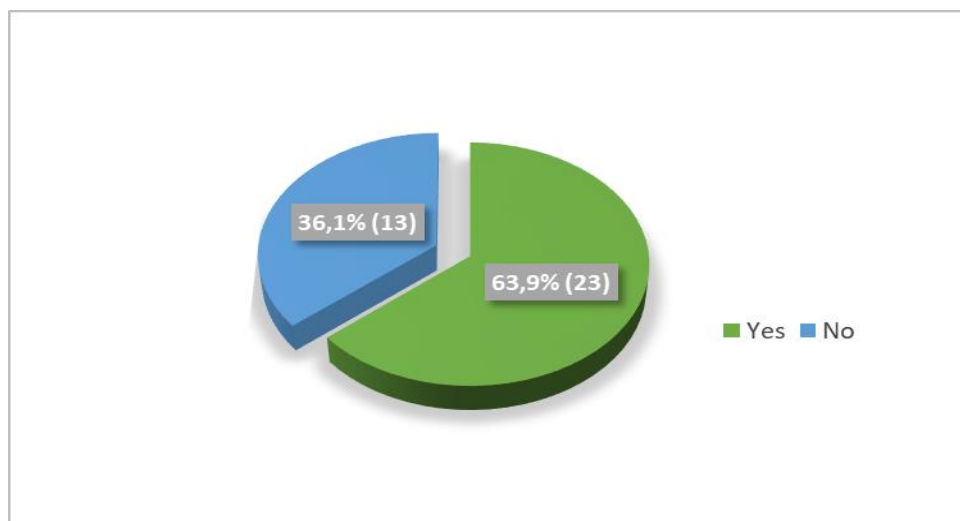


Graph 17: *Most Beneficial Factors that can Foster Learners' Readiness for Autonomy*

Q3/ Do you think that distant learning lessens the role of the teacher?

Since there is a shift from traditional classroom to distant learning, there must be a change in the role of the teacher, thus participants were asked whether this role is

reduced or not. (63.9%) participants agreed that the teacher's role is lessened in distant learning; whereas, the rest of the population (36.1%) disagreed (Graph18). This type of learning undertakes the approach of learner-centeredness where the student is the main actor of his learning process, and where the teacher is only a guide and a monitor. However, those who said that the role of the teacher is not affected by DL are aware of the countless efforts of teachers. DL does not prevent teachers' interference to provide continuous support, help and guide like giving feedback to each student separately instead of giving a single one to the whole class.

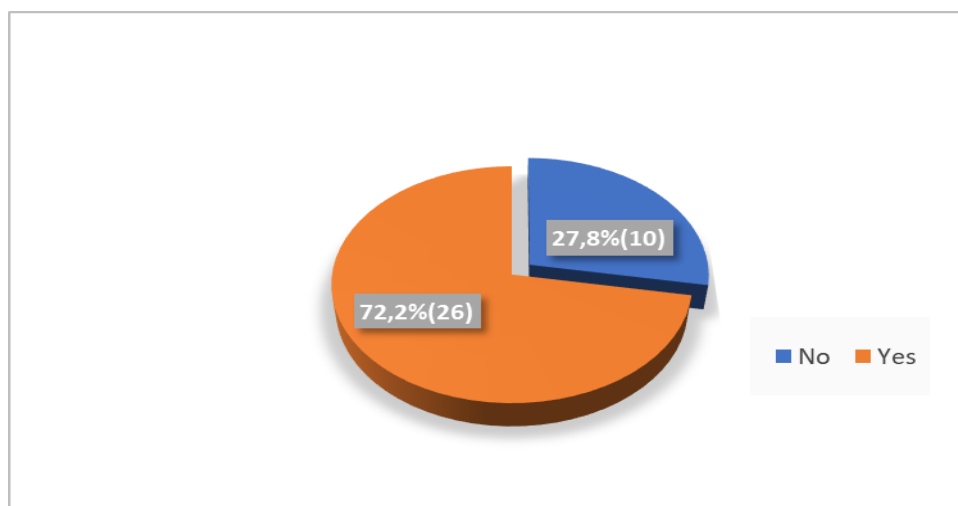


Graph 18: Influence of Distant Learning on Reducing Teachers' Role

Q4/ Do you think that distant learning helps you to enhance your learning strategies?

Students were questioned about the influence of distant learning on enhancing their learning strategies. In graph 19, about (72.2%) of them noticed the impact of DL on developing the learning strategies while (27.8%) of them did not admit the help of DL in acquiring those strategies. In DL, students become self-directed and self-reliant in terms of their learning which pushes them to search and select the best learning strategy that can help them to deepen their understanding of lectures. Students get

distracted from developing new learning strategies since they are busy building ICTs skills and trying to formularize with this type of learning. Also, some students use the same learning strategies for any kind of learning.



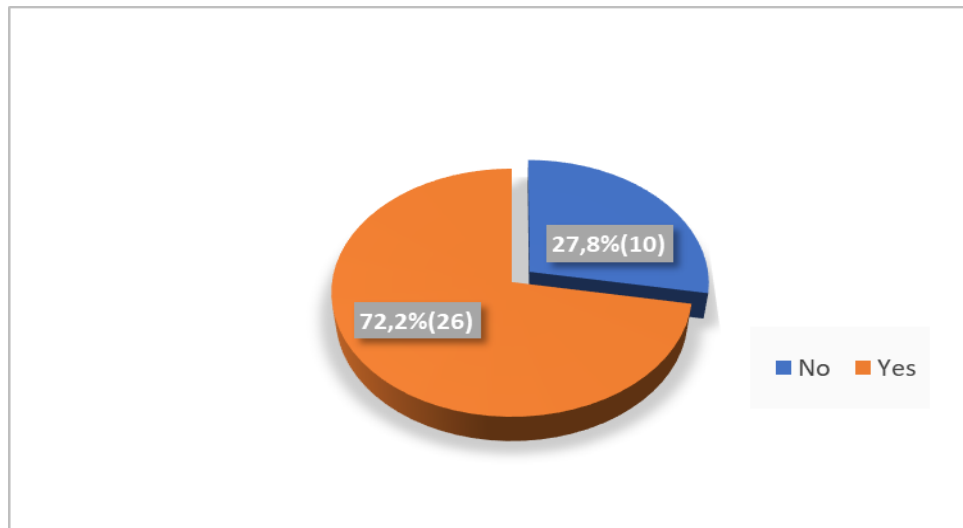
Graph 19: *Influence of Distant Learning on Enhancing Learners' Learning Strategies*

Q5/ Do you think that integrating online learning in EFL learning motivates you to become more engaged in the learning process?

Figuring out what EFL learners think about the influence of integrating online learning, and whether it motivates them to become more engaged in their learning process is the objective of this question. (72.2%) of the students admitted this influence; however, the rest of the population (27.8%) of the students opposed the idea as shown in graph 20.

The integration of online learning can be partial (blended learning) or full (DL). It is proved that distant learning enhances learners' motivation intrinsically and extrinsically since it expands their willingness to learn and accept the challenges for better learning experience (Holec, 1981; Allwright, 1990; Little, 1991). Students are excited to use the English language outside the classroom borders; they practice the

language by interacting with other EFL learners around the world as well as with natives through online means. Yet, DL does not motivate some students who prefer traditional means and depend on the teacher. Their motivation is linked to the selection of interesting activities and tasks regardless of the learning type.

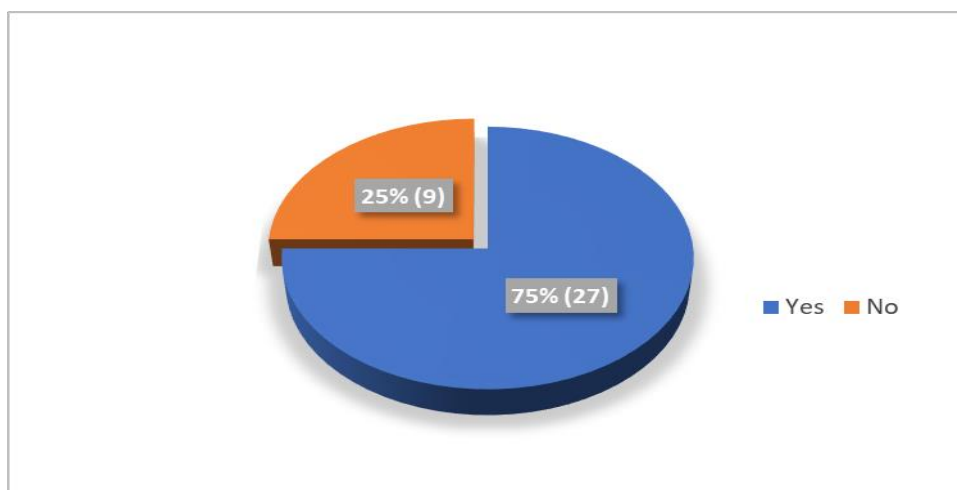


Graph 20: *Influence of Integrating Online Learning on EFL Learners'*

Motivation and Engagement in the Learning Process

Q6/ Do you see a bond between autonomy and distant learning?

After dealing with the two concepts of distant learning and autonomy in the previous questions and after giving insights to the students about the relationship between the two, students were given a direct question whether they see a bond between DL and autonomy or not. The majority of students (75%) saw this bond while (25%) of them did not. The results are represented in graph21. There is a tight association between the two as suggested by Moore's Transactional Distance theory where distant learners are responsible for their own learning since they are distant from teachers and learning environments (Moore, 2007).The other point of view sees that autonomous learners acquire this quality regardless of learning type, and non-autonomous learners depend on tutors even in online or e-learning courses.

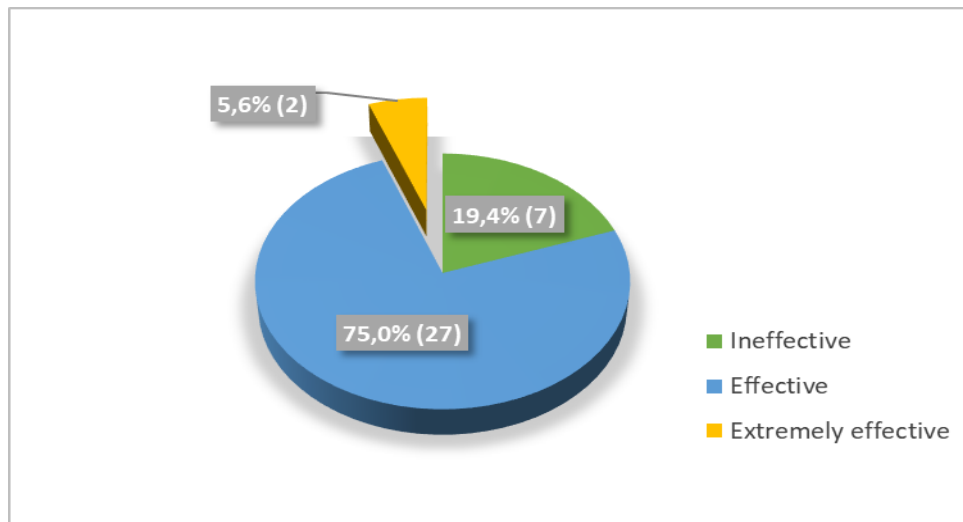


Graph 21: Existence of a Bond between Autonomy and Distant Learning

Q7/ In comparison to traditional learning environment, how do you perceive distant learning in fostering learners' autonomy?

To conclude the section, learners' were questioned about their opinion concerning the effectiveness of Distant Learning in fostering their autonomy in comparison to the traditional one. (80.6%) of the population qualified this effectiveness; (75%) students said that it is effective, and (5.6%) said it is ineffective. Yet, about (19.4%) of them did not approve its effectiveness. Graph 22 exhibits the results.

When comparing traditional learning and distant learning in terms of approach centeredness, TL still adopts the teacher-centered approach even if the students are given larger space to perform nowadays, but the tutor is still the controller of the learning process. DL follows the learner-centered approaches which compels students to take charge of their learning and become much less dependent on the teachers and thus autonomous. Those who said it is ineffective; it is because they did not experience the real DL, or they are already autonomous learners.



Graph 22: *Influence of Distant Learning on Fostering Learners' Autonomy in Comparison to Traditional One*

5. Discussion of Results

The questionnaire's results were manifested in graphs, interpreted and analyzed as an attempt to answer the research questions based on exploring the attitudes of Master 2 students - of the University Center of Mila –towards the concerned variables of this thesis (dissertation). Thus, this part is devoted to the discussion of the findings.

1. EFL Learners' Attitudes towards Distant Learning

1.1. Influence of Learners' Gender, Age, EFL Experience and Level on their Attitudes towards Distant Learning

DL is preferable by males because it permits them to balance their lives between work and studies; whereas, females' preference to DL is attributed to their desire to study from home.

Learners with younger age favor DL since they like using technology and staying updated with modern innovations. Nonetheless, elder learners have poor skills in using ICTs; that is why, they feel more comfortable in a traditional environment.

The more learning experience and the more advanced level in EFL of learners are, the more they become autonomous and less dependent on the teacher which enables them to study in a DL environment.

1.2. Availability of Resources to Acquire Languages

Many EFL learners use the Internet to study English since access to the net is available to all especially via the use of their smart phones. This promotes the flexibility in learning languages at any time, and it motivates them to develop their level.

1.3. Integration of Technology in Learning

Many EFL learners tend to enjoy learning more when technology is integrated, and when blended learning is implemented because they get to be exposed to two types of learning at the same time. This permits them to take advantage of the privileges of both. In other words, face-to-face communication and interaction is granted with further expansion of knowledge using ICTs.

1.4. Benefits of DL and the Encountered Challenges in Internet Usage

Many students prefer learning from a distance due to many advantages. For one, it is a new learning experience that exposes learners to new materials and makes them eager to learn. For another, it opens a door for a valuable learning opportunities. Despite of its high worth, it is not flawless from challenges in terms of Internet connection which is the basis of this learning type. Among these obstacles, poor access to Network connection is the common one. Limited skills in using ICTs and lack of technical support are also among these challenges. The latter justifies the disapproval of DL by some learners and its deficiencies mentioned by some others.

1.5. Effectiveness of Distant Learning and its Future

There is a high chance that DL will be the dominant type of learning in the coming years since it proved its effectiveness in undergoing a successful learning

process and achieving the course goals during the pandemic. Considering that Internet generation are always open up to radical changes and updates of technology, there is a bright future for DL, yet the value of TL will never fade away.

2. Impact of Distant Learning on EFL Learners' Readiness for Autonomy

2.1 Importance of being Autonomous for an EFL Learner

Indeed, being independent is crucial for an EFL learner which is developed through a set of factors including the use of technology to advance his/her language level. And in this sense, the learner-centered approach is applied where the teacher's role is minimized to put more emphasis on the learner to be more self-educated.

2.2. Bond between Distant Learning and Autonomy

There is a tripartite association between DL, motivation and autonomy. This combination creates a direct bond between DL and autonomy since the teacher's role is lessened to only guide students who are placed a greater responsibility. They are ought to develop their own learning strategies, have a say in the selection of learning resources and have self-reliance in processing content and solving tasks with deadlines. In short, DL has an influence in fostering their autonomy. Being a distant learner implicates being autonomous which involves the integration of technologies and online resources that triggers their motivation to be engaged in the learning process.

Conclusion

This chapter includes an analysis, an interpretation and a discussion about the collected data from a questionnaire administered to Master 2 students of University Center of Mila for the purpose of answering the research questions. To bring this chapter to the intended end, it is important to mention that attitudes were varied. Many students showed acceptance towards distant learning or any learning that involves technology due its effectiveness and its countless advantages which set its potential

application in the future of EFL instruction. Moreover, the findings show that EFL learners certify the crucial role of DL in fostering their autonomy.

Pedagogical Implications

➤ For Teachers and Learners

- Both teachers and learners should be educated about the part they play in distant learning in order to have an effective and efficient implementation.
- Both teachers and learners should receive special courses to foster their ICTs skills since it is a necessary competence for DL.
- They should equally be open up to try new methods, select adequate materials and develop learning and teaching strategies to fulfil the needs and reach the set objectives under DL.
- They should also work to overcome the deficiencies encountered in DL.
- Interaction should be emphasized to assure the success of distant learning programs.

➤ For Researchers

- Algerian researchers should devote more research to the variables of this research to cope with the current changes in education like research about the implementation of distant learning in Algeria during the pandemic.
- Researchers should endeavor further studies about distant learning in relation to other variables like: EFL teachers' attitudes towards distant learning, EFL learners' and teachers' attitudes towards the impact of distant learning on developing individual skills, and approaches to promote learners' autonomy in DL.
- This research can be conducted via other research tools such as interviews and focus group.

- Researchers ought to collect data about other EFL learners' attitudes in Algeria to compare the results and provide an in-depth analysis and conclusions.

➤ **For Educational Decision-Makers**

- Since kids' generation are always using their phones connecting on social media or playing games, decision-makers should take advantage of this reality and make education as part of their routine on their phones.
- Learners' attitudes should be taken into consideration due to their high significance in testing the effectiveness of learning procedures in DL.

General Conclusion

In studying a foreign language, specialists are always ready to create, test, modify and then reapply new approaches, methods, strategies and types of learning in order to improve the teaching learning process and better the outcomes. Distant Learning is not a new type of learning, but it was applied as an emergency fire escape during the pandemic of Covid-19 in the whole world. Then, decision-makers, teachers and students started thinking about the potential application of it outside the crisis.

Since distant learning is the new educational trend that many institutions started to adopt, an evaluation of it is required. This evaluation includes eliciting different views from practitioners of distant learning. In this research, the polling focused on EFL learners' perceptions as learners represent the core of the learning process and the direct beneficiaries. Under a descriptive study, data were collected from Master 2 students of the University Center of Mila as a sample of this study via an online questionnaire for the purpose of exploring EFL learners' attitudes towards distant learning and its impact on their readiness for autonomy. This thesis contains the theoretical ground to the concept tackled which serves as the cornerstone for the field work. The research results indicated that distant learning is effective, for it guarantees flexibility, provides opportunities, considers learners' needs and preferences' in course design, facilitates the learning process through the use of technology and, at its largest benefit, fosters learners' autonomy. However, distant learning stumbling block cannot be ignored especially concerning the poor access to net connection and technical skills that are still major problems in Africa. The latter are very much the prime challenges that need to be eliminated in future implementation of DL.

Based on these conclusions, further adjustment needs to be done to improve the quality of distant learning application and to achieve its target goals. Furthermore, to

boost distant learning effectiveness, EFL teachers and learners have to perform their respective roles. It is also noteworthy to validate technology as a pedagogical tool used in DL process.

To bring this thesis to an end, the findings of this research will add valuable insights and rise discussion of themes and divergent avenues for future research about distant learning.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Students' Questionnaire.....	90-95
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Appendix 1: Students' Questionnaire**Topic: Distance Learning: Investigating EFL Learners' Perceptions towards and****Readiness for Autonomy**

Dear students,

You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire which is an attempt to gather information needed for the accomplishment of a Master dissertation. Your cooperation will help us to investigate EFL learners' perceptions towards distant learning and their readiness for autonomy. We will be so grateful for your answers which will be anonymous and will remain confidential.

P.S: Please, read each question carefully and choose relevant answer(s) by ticking the box (es) and providing explanation where necessary.

Section One: Background Information**1/Are you?**

- Male
- Female

2/How old are you?

- 22 -24 years old
- 24-26 years old
- 26-28 years old
- Over 28 years old

3/How long have you been learning English?

- 8-9 years
- 10-11years
- 12 years
- Over 12 years

4/How do you rate your level in English?

- Beginner
- Intermediate
- Advanced

Section Two: Perceptions of EFL Learners' towards Distant Learning / Distance**Education****1/ Do you have access to the internet?**

- Yes
- No

2/ How often do you use the internet to study English?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

3/ What is the device that you use while learning, if ever?

- Smart phones
- Computers / laptop
- Tablets
- Others:

4/ If you were given the choice to be exposed to the following types of learning, which one would you opt for?

- Traditional learning
- Distant learning
- Blended learning (a mixture of the two)

5/ Do your teachers suggest online courses, e-books, videos, websites... for your learning?

Yes

No

6/ If yes, do you get motivated when they do so?

Yes

No

7/ Do you prefer learning from a distance?

Yes

No

8/If yes because: it is a new learning experience.

it fosters your motivation and autonomy.

you get exposed to new learning materials.

all of the above

9/ What are the challenges that you encounter while using the internet in your learning process?

Limited access to Network connection

Limited technical support

Poor skills in using CALL/ technology

All of the above

Others:

10/ In comparison to traditional learning environment, do you think that distant learning is?

Ineffective

Effective

- Extremely effective

11/ Do you think that distant learning will replace traditional classrooms in the future?

- Yes
- No

Section Three: The Impact of Distant Learning on EFL Learners' Readiness for

Autonomy

1/ Is it important for an EFL learner to be autonomous?

- Notimportant
- Important
- Extremely important

2/ what are the most beneficial learning factors that can foster your readiness for autonomy?

- Learners' individual learning styles
- Teachers' minimized role
- Learners' motivation
- Choosing adequate materials
- Selecting interesting tasks and activities
- Integration of technology
- All of the above

Others:

3/ Do you think that distant learning lessens the role of the teacher?

- Yes
- No

4/ Do you think that distant learning helps you to enhance your learning strategies?

- Yes
- No

5/ Do you think that integrating online learning in EFL learning motivates you to become more engaged in the learning process?

- Yes
- No

6/ Do you see a bond between autonomy and distant learning?

- Yes
- No

7/ In comparison to traditional learning environment, how do you perceive distant learning in fostering learners' autonomy?

- Ineffective
- Effective
- Extremely effective

ملخص

التعلم عن بعد هو التعلم الذي يتم فيه فصل المتعلم عن المعلم بحيث تكون التكنولوجيا هي وسيلة الربط بينهما. وقد اعتمد هذا التعلم عالمياً خلال جائحة كوفيد-19، إلا أنه نُظر إليه بشكل متباين من حيث فاعليته وتأثيره على الاستقلالية والتسيير الذاتي لدى المتعلمين. ومن هذا المنطلق قمنا بإجراء هذا البحث لسبر آراء ومواقف متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه التعلم عن بعد، وتأثيره على استعدادهم للاستقلالية والتسيير الذاتي. وقد كان الهدف من هذا البحث الإجابة على الإشكاليات التالية:

(1) ما هي مواقف متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه التعلم عن بعد؟

(2) كيف كانت آراء متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه التأثير الذي يتركه التعلم عن بعد في استعداد المتعلمين للاستقلالية؟

وللإجابة على هذه الإشكاليات قسمنا البحث إلى فصلين؛ يدرس الفصل الأول المتغيرات المختلفة للتعلم عن بعد، الاستقلالية، ومتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، ثم يتوسع إلى العلاقة المتبادلة بينهم. أما الفصل الثاني فهو عبارة عن جانب تطبيقي ميداني، عمدنا فيه إلى استخدام طريقة وصفية عبر أداة استبيان حوت عدة أسئلة حول الموضوع، ثم وزعت على طلبة الماستر 2 في المركز الجامعي ميلا للإجابة عنها. ومن خلال تحليلنا للنتائج ودراستها توصلنا إلى أن التعلم عن بعد فعال مقارنة بالتعلم التقليدي، كونه يعمل على تعزيز استقلالية المتعلمين. أما عن أهمية هذا البحث، فتكمن في كونه يشمل المعلمين والمتعلمين؛ ذلك أنه يحدد دور كل فرد في نجاح التعلم عن بعد. كما أنه يفتح رؤى وآفاقا مستقبلية لتطبيق هذا النوع من التعليم في الجزائر، ويفتح أبوابا جديدة لمناقشة أفكار التعلم عبر الأنترنت.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم عن بعد، الاستقلالية، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، المواقف، التعلم عبر الأنترنت.

Résumé

L'apprentissage à distance se définit comme étant un type d'apprentissage dans lequel l'apprenant et son enseignant sont mis en contact et en ligne à travers le moyen de communication " la technologie". Ce type a été mis en œuvre à l'échelle mondiale pendant la pandémie de COVID-19, cependant, il a été perçu différemment en termes d'efficacité et d'impact sur l'autonomie des apprenants. De ce fait, cette recherche est menée pour sonder les points de vue et les attitudes des apprenants de l'anglais comme une langue étrangère à l'égard de l'apprentissage à distance, et son impact sur l'autonomie de ces derniers. La crise sanitaire que le monde a vécue ces dernières années, la suspension hasardeuse des études et l'exploitation de la technologie numérique (l'enseignement à distance) à l'échelle mondiale sauf notre pays, a éveillé l'intérêt vers ce thème. Cette motivation de choix mène à poser les problématiques suivantes : 1. Quelles sont les opinions des apprenants d'Anglais comme une langue étrangère vis-à-vis l'apprentissage à distance ? 2. Quelles étaient les opinions des apprenants concernant impact de l'apprentissage à distance sur leur capacité d'être autonomes? Cette thèse incarne les différentes variables et la relation entre chacune d'entre elles dans la partie théorique: Apprentissage à distance, autonomie et apprenants EFL. Le deuxième est un travail de terrain qui est consacré à remplir l'objectif de l'étude en utilisant une méthode descriptive via l'outil questionnaire qui a été destiné aux étudiants de Master 2 du Centre Universitaire de Mila. Les résultats obtenus ont montré que l'apprentissage à distance est plus efficace par rapport à l'apprentissage traditionnel du fait qu'il contribue à favoriser l'autonomie des apprenants. Cette recherche est significative et importante pour les enseignants et les apprenants car elle détermine le rôle de chacun dans la réussite de l'enseignement et l'apprentissage à distance. Elle contribue également à la recherche future, car elle donne une vision sur la mise en

œuvre de l'apprentissage à distance en Algérie et ouvre des portes pour créer de nouvelles idées sur l'apprentissage en ligne.

Mots clés : L'apprentissage a distance, autonomie, les apprenants de EFL, les opinions, l'apprentissage en ligne.