AUTONOMOUS LANGUAGE LEARNING IN EFL-CLASSROOMS IN
FINLAND:
A descriptive study

Master's Thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Autonomisella kielenoppimisella tarkoitetaan oppilaan taitoa ja kykyä hallita ja arvioida omaa kielenoppimista. Tämä taito on opittavissa opettajan ja oppilaiden yhteistyön tuloksena. Autonominen kielenoppiminen on herättänyt kasvavassa määrin kiinnostusta kielenoppimisen kentällä. Tämän tutkimuksen pääasiallisena tehtävänä oli selvittää autonomisen kielenoppimisen tunnettavuutta englannin kielen opettajien keskuudessa Suomessa. Lisäksi tarkasteltiin osallistujien asenteita ja valmiuksia autonomista kielenoppimista kohtaan.

Aineiston keruu tapahtui internetkyselyiden avulla. Vastaajajoukko koostui kolmesta ryhmästä: englanninkielen opettajat (N=89), englannin kielen opettajaharjoittelijat (N=53) sekä yläkoulun ja lukion englannin kielen opiskelijat (N=56). Yhteensä tutkimus tavoitti 201 vastaajaa.

Tutkimuksen avulla saatiin selville, että valtaosalle opettajista ja opettajaharjoittelijoista autonominen kielenoppiminen ei ole käsitteenä tuttu. Tutkimuksessa saatiin myös selville, että vaikka koehenkilöt kokevat autonomiseen kielenoppimiseen liittyvät arvot tärkeiksi ja omaavat joitakin autonomiseen kielenoppimiseen liittyviä taitoja, ei näitä kuitenkaan tavan luokkahuoneissa käytetä aktiivisesti hyödyksi.

Tutkimuksen tuloksia voidaan hyödyntää mm. opettajankoulutuksen kehittämisessä. Lisäksi se antaa opettajille mahdollisuuden tarkastella ja kehittää työskentelyään ja ehkä hyödyntää luokassa ilmeneviä taitoja paremmin.

Asiasanat – Keywords Autonomous language learning, Language learning
Säilytyspaikka – Depository Kielten Laitos
Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1   INTRODUCTION

Education is the corner stone of our modern civilisation. However, our society is changing fast, especially with new technological developments. In this changing and expanding world the requirements for education are also changing. Scholars such as Robinson (2011) have argued how the current school systems are killing creativity that would be vitally needed in the future. We can no longer assume that providing our learners with static knowledge will provide them with what they need in the future. Therefore, the goal of educating lifelong learners is commonly accepted in the field of education. Furthermore, there is a growing interest in making learners more involved and finding more learner centred ways of working. In the field of EFL currently one of the biggest trends addressing this topic is autonomous language learning. This study set out to map its present position in Finland.

Based on the Finnish school health survey 2010-2011 (National Institute for Health and Welfare, 2013) almost half of the Finnish pupils do not know how to influence the school system and around 40% of the pupils feel that they are not heard in school. In addition, 43% of the lower secondary school pupils feel that teachers do not encourage them to express their opinions in class. Some improvement occurs as students move into upper secondary school, as the percentages are almost half of the lower secondary school. However, this progression seems not to be because of the age of students, as vocational school students, who are the same age as upper secondary school students, showed similar results to lower secondary school students. This indicates a different treatment of pupils in different branches of education. On a more positive note, when comparing to previous years, the situation is changing, as overall more and more pupils feel they are heard in school. This shows that schools and teachers have interest towards involving pupils more in the school practices.

This is also evident from the publications and training programs recently done in Finland, such as the book *Lapsesta käsin* (Paalasmaa (Eds.) 2011), which presents a variety of learner centred approaches to education. The teacher training programs such as *osallistuva oppilas – yhteisöllinen koulu* (Ministry of Education and Culture 2013), is designed to give tools for creating a new, more democratic school environment that would also encourage pupils towards becoming an active participants of the society. Moreover, in the field of foreign language education in Finland, European Language Portfolio – project (ELP) (Kielisalkku 2013) is offered for teachers as a tool for involving the learners more holistically into the learning process. All these are based on the same learner centred ideology as autonomous language learning. However, autonomous language learning is mostly studied at university level in Finland, for instance the ALMS project (autonomous learning modules) of Helsinki University Language Centre. In addition, there are numerous contributions from the University of Tampere, for example by Kohonen (2008) who has studied the use of the European Language Portfolio in foreign language teaching. In addition, the University of Helsinki Language Centre also hosted the 7th Nordic Conference and workshop on autonomous language learning in the year 2000. Moreover, in 2009 the University of Tampere published a book that offers an extensive description of the field of autonomous language learning (Kjisik, Voller, Aoki and Nakata 2009). Even though Finnish scholars have been actively involved in the field of autonomous language learning, studies about the familiarity of the term among English teachers in Finland, have not been done before.

This study set out to discover how well known autonomous language learning is among teachers and teacher trainees in Finland. Although autonomous language learning has been a part of the field of language learning and teaching for around four decades and similar goals that could be reached with autonomous language learning, are promoted for instance by the Ministry of

Education and Culture, the hypotheses of this study was that autonomous language learning is not a widely known term among the English teachers. I would argue that having a deeper understanding of autonomous language learning could benefit the teachers and for instance motivate them to use language portfolios. With the help of autonomous language learning the varied needs of the learners could be acknowledged and it could also help with motivational and behavioural problems. Moreover, it could equip the learners with skills for genuine lifelong learning, which is crucial in a world that is constantly changing and developing.

This study is based on a quantitative method but is more descriptive in nature. The data was collected through internet questionnaires that were sent to teachers, teacher trainees and pupils. These three participant groups were chosen to get as reliable and varied view of the situation as possible, as looking at the same situation from multiple angles provides a more trustworthy account. Both teachers and teacher trainees were involved, so that possible differences, for instance in the understanding of the term, could be compared. Also the students were involved in order to see how they perceive the language learning. The results were analysed with the spss-program.

In the theoretical framework of this thesis I am first going to present a short history of autonomous language learning as well as describe the features of an autonomous learner. I am also going to present some examples how autonomous language learning is fostered in education through previous studies as well as discuss about measuring autonomy in language learning. Following the theoretical framework I am going to present the design of the present study. Following this the results are reported in chapter four. The results are discussed in chapter five. In the conclusion implications of the findings as well as ideas for future research are stated.

2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on the field of autonomy in language learning. Autonomous language learning is close to and shares some features with active language learning, the communicative approach, individualised teaching, self-access materials and self-directed language learning. However, autonomous language learning is considered to represent its own branch in the field of language learning and teaching, with its own distinctive features (Benson 2011, Little 1991, Holec 1979). The term has developed for instance with work done by David Little, Phil Benson and Leni Dam. I am first going to present the history of autonomous language learning and its origins. Following this I am going to look at the definitions of the term and finally introduce and discuss aspects of fostering and measuring autonomous language learning.

2.1   History of autonomous language learning

The history of autonomous language learning reaches back roughly four decades, and it is considered to start with the work done in the *Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues* (CRAPEL) in France in the 1970's. CRAPEL was created as a result of the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project. After the death of the original leader Yves Châlon, Henri Holec became the leader of the CRAPEL institute and he still remains as one of the central figures in the field of autonomous language learning today (Benson 2011: 9). I am first going to discuss the history and changes in society leading up to autonomous language learning and then I am going to present current research done in the field.

2.1.1 History before Holec

The history of autonomous language learning originated in the 1970′s with the preliminary work Henry Holec did with adult learners. I am going to present the history leading up to this through two main sources, Benson, and Gremmo and Riley. Benson (2011) has written an extensive and recently updated history of autonomy in language learning and Gremmo and Riley (1995) offer a description of the social changes leading up to autonomous language learning.

The basic idea behind learner autonomy, which is the idea of learners taking responsibility for their own learning, is not a new one in the field of education. For instance, Benson (2011: 27) mentions the famous quote by Galileo, who said about teaching and learning that "You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself". In addition, Benson (2011: 28) argues that even though not often quoted in the field of autonomous learning, Rousseau had similar ideas to the ones found in learner autonomy:

> his [Rousseau's] emphasis on the learner's responsibility for learning is a key idea of autonomy. Many advocates of autonomy in language learning would also share Rousseau's view that capacity for autonomy is innate but suppressed by institutional learning. Similarly Rousseau's idea that learning proceeds better through direct contact with nature re-emerges in the emphasis on direct contact with authentic samples of the target language that is often found in the literature on autonomy in language learning. (Benson, 2011: 28)

Moreover, Vygotsky has offered relevant points to the field of autonomy, especially with the idea of the zone of proximal development (Benson 2011: 42, Little 2007). Little (2007: 22-23) argues that the zone of proximal development not only entails the features of autonomous learning and teaching (the importance of expert guiding, that learning comes from doing and doing things for oneself, independent problem solving) but that it also defines the importance of autonomy especially in language learning. Little (2007: 22-23)

mentions how the target language needs to be used in order to find the zone of proximal development, giving language learner autonomy one of its "essential characteristic" (Little 2007: 23).

Benson (2011) writes about the four main areas that have influenced the concept of autonomous language learning beyond the field of language learning. These are the psychology of learning, educational reform, adult education and the philosophy of personal autonomy. According to Benson (2011:38) in the field of psychology of learning autonomous language learning is based on mainly constructivism, as Benson states:

> If knowledge is constructed uniquely within each individual through social interaction, it follows that learning will be most effective when learners are fully involved in decisions about the content and process of learning (Benson, 2011: 39)

Secondly, adult education and self-directed learning have given positive examples of individuals being in control of their own learning. However, as such, self-directed learning and autonomous learning are not considered to be the same thing. Benson (2011: 37) mentions that the main difference between autonomy in language learning and self-directed learning is that autonomy is more of an "attribute of the learner" whereas self-directed learning is more of a "mode of learning". According to Benson (2011: 27), educational reform was also an influence in the development of autonomous language learning, as it promotes freedom in learning. In addition, Benson (2011: 49) mentions the development of the concept of personal autonomy in the field of philosophy, based on ideas from Kant (1724-1804) and Mill (1806-1873). Personal autonomy is often considered as one of the basic human needs, as humans from a young age show individual characteristics and actively pursue their own agendas. Philosophy has continued to contribute to the field of learner autonomy, especially in the past 20 years, for instance with the ideas of the post-modern self (Benson quotes for instance Raz 1986). However, from philosophy there are

only few straight references to the field of educational autonomy, even though it has given a lot to the field of learner autonomy implicitly (Benson 2011:52).

In addition to developments in the academic field, there were also social changes taking place, which created a society where autonomous language learning could and needed to develop. Gremmo and Riley (1995) list these developments. However, it should be noted, as stated by Gremmo and Riley (1995) that by no means is this listing the absolute truth about the development leading to autonomous language learning. According to them:

> it would be extremely foolhardy to try to trace these concepts back to a any single source or date of origin, especially a recent one, since they have complex relationships with developments in philosophy, political science, psychology and sociology, stretching back many centuries in some cases. (Gremmo and Riley 1995: 152)

Nonetheless, some reasons can be identified. After the Second World War a new kind of society was forming, where people were able to become more active and in control of their own life, where the individual was gaining more importance and at the same time the world was becoming more global and interconnected (Gremmo and Riley 1995). First of all, more people were taking part of education, creating a need for new teaching methods. In addition, learning languages was gaining more demand, for instance through easier travelling possibilities. With this development, teaching and learning languages was also changing into a commercially usable product, where the learners were also paying customers. Moreover, these paying customers were also able purchase new technological devices, such as the tape recorder or the video recorder, which could be used in language learning. Moreover, the rise of different minority movements also changed the education circles, and the rights of the individual were more appreciated. Lastly one clear act that helped the development of autonomous language learning was the introduction on the Council of Europe's Modern Language Project (CRAPEL) in 1971, which

focused on adult education and is commonly seen as the starting point for autonomous language learning. These developments that changed the western society after the Second World War, for example individualism and technological developments, have continued to increase and are still present in our society now.

As discussed in this chapter, the history of autonomy is not based on single ideology or political view. Naturally, autonomous language learning, especially in the context of this thesis is concerned with pedagogical context, but this larger context helps to see the ideology behind the idea. Benson summarizes how the understanding of the larger background is an important part of the concept of autonomous language learning:

> In the context of language education, the more convincing arguments for autonomy are likely to be pedagogical rather than political or philosophical. Yet we should also recognise that pedagogical decisions in respect to autonomy are often based upon underlying philosophical assumptions. (Benson 2011: 57)

In this part I have discussed how autonomous language learning has strong base among the field of education, and especially language education. Next I am going move from presenting the history leading up to autonomous language learning into looking at the developments of autonomous language learning itself.

2.1.2   History after Holec

The history of autonomous language learning as such only reaches back the last four decades. From the early days of defining the term to finding more practical realisations in school context, it has continued to raise interest in a growing speed, and is now, in the 21st century more active than ever before. In the

beginning naturally some definition problems were evident, as the definition of the term was only finding its place in the field. As stated by Benson (2011: 14) by the late 1980's the term was facing some identity crisis, as it was often associated with independent learning. Based on this background, for instance Little started his book '*Learner autonomy. 1, Definitions, issues and problems*' with first defining what autonomy is not.

Little mentioned in the beginning of the 1990's that autonomy was the new "buzz word" in language learning, which definitely could still be true today, as for instance Benson (2007: 21) notes that the amount of publications released in the 21st century already exceeds the number of publications done in the previous 25 years. In addition to Benson, Little and Dam, for instance Ushioda (2011) has written extensively especially about motivation and autonomous language learning. Farrel and Jacobs (2010), who see autonomy as a requirement for successful language teaching, mention how autonomy is one of the main goals in the field of foreign language teaching. Autonomous language learning has also moved away from only western context to Asia and Africa, see for instance Kuchah and Smith (2011) for Africa context and Nakata (2011) for Japanese context. The approaches and understandings of autonomy in language learning are not only divided by cultural context but also by ideological approach. For instance Kumaravadivelu (2001) divides the field of autonomy into two approaches, narrow and broad. By narrow he means approaches that focus on the pedagogical side of autonomy, as in approaches that focus on helping learners to learn for instance through different learning strategies. With broad approaches he means views that consider autonomy should liberate and empower people.

The 1990's was a significant decade for autonomous language learning as the work done by Dam in a Danish school was published. This helped autonomous language learning to move away from adult context into a school context. Based

on the need of working with unmotivated learners Dam proceeded to develop autonomous learning methods with highly successful results. Also in Finland experiments with autonomous language learning and teaching started in the 1990's, of which the most notable is probably the ALMS-project of the language centre of the University of Helsinki.

Little (2007) notes that although increased interest has been raised towards autonomous language learning, it still is not a general feature among language learners on a larger scale or among mainstream education:

> "None of this means, of course, that autonomy is now a defining characteristic of language learners around the world; on the contrary, the practical realisation of language learner autonomy remains elusive (Little 2007: 15)

Finding practical realisations of autonomous language learning is one the biggest interests in the field today. Next I am going to present definitions of autonomous language learning.

2.2 Defining Autonomy in language Learning

The purpose of this chapter is to define what is meant by autonomous language learning and teaching. Benson summarises that a sufficient definition of autonomy should address at least three levels of learner involvement: learning management, cognitive processes and learning content (Benson, 2011: 61). First I am going to present the general definitions of autonomy in language learning and secondly in more detail the characteristics of an autonomous learner and teacher.

Definitions of autonomy in language learning have been around from the 1970s' onwards and one of the earliest and the most often quoted definitions on

autonomy is by Henry Holec, written in 1979, which states how autonomy is
the ability to take charge:

> In the context with which we are dealing, the learning of languages,
> autonomy is consequently the <u>ability to take charge of one's own
> learning</u>. This ability is not inborn but must be acquired either by
> "natural" means or (as most often happens) by formal learning, ie in
> a systematic, deliberate way. (Underlining by original) (Holec 1979:
> 3)

According to Holec (1979:4) the autonomous learner is able to determine goals,
select appropriate tools and methods and follow and evaluate his/her own
progress and that these skills are learnt gradually. Moreover, Holec (1979: 4-5)
specified his definition by emphasizing that autonomy is indeed an ability, not
behaviour. Holec (1979: 7) also mentions the difference between the concept of
individualized teaching, which can be done in a strictly teacher orientated
classroom as well, for example if the teacher creates individualized materials
for all the learners, and autonomy which always requires moving away from
the teacher orientated way of working. As one of the first definitions of learner
autonomy Holec's definition has endured time well, but it left out the
psychological aspect of autonomous language learning, which is for instance
discussed by Little (2007).

In 1991 Little published his widely quoted book *Learner Autonomy: definitinos,
issues and problems*, in which he approaches the concept of autonomy by first
determining what it is not. According to Little (1991: 3-4) there are five
misconceptions often associated to autonomous language learning. These are,
first of all, that autonomy would mean learning without a teacher, secondly that
teacher would have to give up all initiative and control, thirdly that autonomy
is a method, fourthly that autonomy is an easily described behaviour and fifth
that it would be a steady state achieved only by gifted learners. First of all
autonomy is not "deciding to learn without a teacher", as teachers have an
important role in an autonomous classroom. As autonomy is a skill and learnt

gradually, the teacher has an important role in fostering autonomy among his/her learners. The second misconception, that "learner autonomy somehow requires the teacher to relinquish all initiative and control" (Little 1991: 3), is false, as these skills would be unlikely to develop on their own. The third false belief about autonomy, that it is "something teachers do to their learner; in other words that it is a new methodology", is over simplifying the concept of autonomy. Autonomy is not a clear-cut solution that will improve learning results simply by ordering the learners to work in a certain manner, rather it requires to be modified for each individual situation and it can take a long time for it to become a functional way of working in a classroom. It is a holistic change, not something that can be done to another person, but rather has to develop within each individual learner. This also argues against the fourth misconception relating to autonomy, that it would be a "single, easily described behaviour"(Little 1991: 3-4). Lastly Little (1991: 4) disagrees with the belief that "autonomy is a steady state achieved by certain learners". Little (1991) argues that autonomy can be achieved by all learners, and autonomy is not a steady state, but rather can vary even within same individual. Little (1991) notes that autonomous learners have always been present in classrooms, but usually it is unconscious behaviour. Making these autonomous habits visible would benefit all learners. Combining his earlier ideas, in 2007 Little described autonomy as a shared experience with the teacher and learners that will progressively grow as the learners are able to take more responsibility:

> Learner autonomy is the product of an interactive process in which the teacher gradually enlarges the scope of her learners' autonomy by gradually allowing them more control of the process and content of their learning. (Little 2007: 26)

Little (2007) has also argued how the need for personal autonomy is a basic human need that all humans have even as a child. Autonomous language learning addresses these needs which will result in better learning. When comparing the two definitions by Holec and Little, Benson (2011: 60) states a

clear difference: "Little's definition was complementary to Holec's, but added a vital psychological dimension".

Littlewoods' (1996) definition echoes strongly the ones made by Little and Holec, but it is included here as it offers a clear explanation of the different factors that create autonomy. Littlewood (1996: 428) defines an autonomous person as someone who:

> "has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions" (Littlewood 1996:428)

According to Littlewood (1996: 428) this ability depends on two factors: *ability* and *willingness*. Furthermore, both of these factors can be divided into two components. Littlewood (1996) states that *ability* consists of *knowledge* and *skills*, and *willingness* consist of *motivation* and *confidence*. This is shown with figure 1 below. In order to function autonomously all of these components should occur simultaneously. Knowledge and skills need to be learnt and motivation and confidence, which lead to willingness, require a learning environment where this type of learning is encouraged.

Figure 1. Littlewood's model
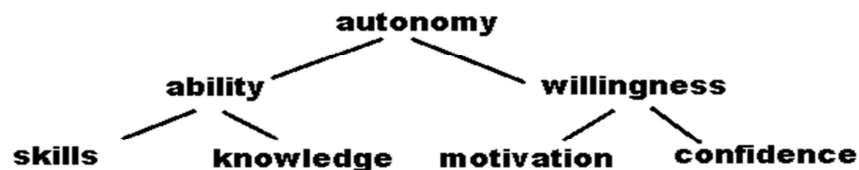
Definitions of autonomy are relatively general in nature, since autonomy can change not only in different contexts but also for the same people during

different times. However, as Benson (2011) has argued, it is important to be able to define autonomy in order to be able to scientifically study it. Based on the definitions of autonomy that were described in this chapter, in this study autonomy is considered as a skill that can be gradually learnt by all learners in a suitable environment. There are good reasons why this should happen, for instance Breen (1991) (as quoted by Benson (2011: 80)) found out that learners were more likely to learn things they had initiated themselves. This is also in line with the idea of personal autonomy, as the majority of us want to be in charge of what we do and are more motivated to do tasks we have initiated ourselves.

2.2.1   The autonomous learner

Fostering autonomy leads into changes in what students and teachers do in a classroom. That is why these subchapters describe these new features autonomous learners and teachers have. First I am going to look at the features of an autonomous learner. It is argued that these autonomous features are based on a basic human need, which are supressed in the school environment and culture, and that these needs can be fostered in order to create autonomous language learning. It is also argued that some autonomous features are likely to be present in every classroom, especially among good learners, though not necessarily acknowledged or fostered.

Little (2007:17-18, 2009: 223-224) draws from psychology as well as from real life experience as a parent, while stating that autonomy is an innate, basic need that is present already from the early years of childhood:

> It is our nature to be autonomous, to be proactive in exploring and responding to our environment and to persist in following the agendas we set for ourselves (Little 2007: 17)

It is now widely agreed with in the field of autonomous language learning that people already possess autonomous features, which can be fostered. Taking control over their studying is not a new feature in learners, as Benson (2011:81) notes:

> Even when subject to direct instruction in classroom settings, therefore, learners appear to take some degree of control over their learning. (Benson 2011:81)

This is visible for instance when a pupil chooses to do a task or not. In addition, Little (1995), Nunan (1997) and Benson (2011: 77) argue that autonomous features, such as taking initiative, self-evaluation and modifying the tasks, have always been present in classrooms, especially with good learners. However, if these natural features are only present in a classroom and not fostered, one cannot speak of an autonomous classroom, as in an autonomous classroom these features are acknowledged and helped to develop. Benson describes how these already existing 'seeds of autonomy' need fostering in order to create autonomous language learning:

> We have observed that, in a wide variety of learning situations, people initiate and manage their own learning, set their own priorities and agendas, and struggle to control psychological factors influencing their learning. This is not to say these learners are necessarily autonomous, as independent efforts to control learning are often episodic and ineffective. Autonomy implies not only the attempt to take control of one's own learning from time to time, but also the capacity to do this systematically and effectively in terms of self-determined goals and purposes. Similarly, fostering autonomy does not mean simply leaving learners to their own devices, but implies a more active process of guidance and encouragement to help learners extend and systematize the capacities that they already possess. (Benson 2011: 91)

Even though autonomous learning is already present in classrooms among good learners, it does not mean that it would not be beneficial for the weaker learners as well. In contrast, research has shown that promoting autonomy for

all learners is especially beneficial for the weaker learners. Based on the results found in practical experiments, for instance with ALMS, or work done by Dam (see Dam and Legenhausen 1996) and Lacey (2007) autonomous language learning and teaching is especially beneficial for the weaker leaners as they gain more confidence and experience positive outcomes with a subject that has probably previously caused them anxiety and negative feelings. Little (1991: 8) goes on describing the benefits of learner autonomy which are for instance the more focused and purposeful learning, as the learner is able to influence what s/he learns.

Autonomous language learning requires the students to become an active participant in her/his learning, rather than a passive receiver. Scholars promoting critical pedagogy, such as Freire and more recently Robinson (2011), have criticised the school system and its passivizing effect on the learner. Naturally, in mainly teacher centred teaching styles some passivation of the learners is necessary in order for a group of 20-30 learners to do the same in thing at the same time. Evidence of this can be found in Finland as well, as a recent study done by Aro (2009) concluded that the Finnish learners of English change their attitudes from the third grade to the fifth grade, where some of the fifth graders started describing themselves as passive receivers of teaching. Moreover, Aro (2009) found that learners seemed unable to benefit from the relatively versatile and easily accessible input of English present outside the classroom in Finland, as the students considered that learning of English is only something done in schools and mainly from school books.

Even though research has shown that becoming an autonomous learner is beneficial for the learner, learners often initially resist the change towards becoming more autonomous, as it requires them to change their behaviour (Dam and Legenhausen 1996, Benson 2011, Little 1995, Lacey 2007). Little (1991: 46) argues that autonomy should be introduced as soon as possible as it is then

likely that it will cause less resistance from the pupils as they have not yet been institutionalized, and are less likely to resist the change into autonomous language learning. Holec (1979: 27) talks about how autonomy is reached through gradual process of "deconditioning" away from prior beliefs as well as gradually "acquiring the knowledge and know-how" the learner needs in order to "assume responsibility for his learning".

To become an autonomous learner is by no means a straight-forward path and being an autonomous learner can manifest differently for different people. Benson suggests that a broader classification of qualities will be more suitable:

> If such competencies do exist, they are probably best described at a relatively broad psychological level and are likely to involve direction of attention, resources, reflection and metacognitive knowledge (Benson, 2011:118)

In addition, Nunan (1997) argues that autonomy is by no means a fixed state but can manifest in different degrees:

> I would argue that autonomy is not an absolute concept. There are degrees of autonomy, and the extent to which it is feasible or desirable for learners to embrace autonomy will depend on a range of factors to do with the personality of the learner, the goals in undertaking the study of another language, the philosophy of the institution (if any) providing the instruction, and the cultural context within which the learning takes place. (Nunan 1997: 193)

However, some attempts to list features of autonomous learners have been made. For instance, Candy (1991) listed more than 100 skills connected to the idea of learner autonomy and categorized these under 13 headings, describing them for example as motivated, reflective, creative and responsible learners (Benson 2011: 117). Breen and Mann (1997: 134-136) have listed eight characteristics they consider belonging to an autonomous language learner. The eight characteristics are:

the person's stance towards the world, their desire for what it is they are learning, their sense of self, their metacognitive capacity, their management of change, their independence from educational processes, their strategic engagement with learning, and their capacity to negotiate (Breen and Mann, 1997: 134)

Benson (2011:118) states a few important notes relating to these types of checklists, for instance reminding that we should be careful and only include aspects that are clearly autonomous and not simply refer to good learners. Moreover, whether these features are personality traits or actual skills should be clearly stated. That is why lists like these were not used in this study, but more emphasis was placed on what is actually done in classrooms and what kind of attitudes learners have about learning.

As a summary, an autonomous learner is someone who is able to reflect on his/her own learning, takes initiative towards their own learning, sets goals and evaluates their own progress. It is also important to note that these are skills that need to be learnt, indicating the important role of the teacher in fostering autonomous learning in his/her classroom. This learning can happen for instance by reflecting and modifying the tasks, and the more skills people have, the more willing they are to use them. Equally important is to note that everyone has the capacity to become an autonomous learner. Next I am going to describe the teacher in an autonomous language learning setting.

2.2.2   The autonomous teacher

Autonomous learning is unlikely to happen in its full potential without the active participation of a teacher who is persistent and willing to promote learner autonomy. It has also been argued that in order for a teacher to promote learner autonomy s/he has had to have personal autonomous learning experiences.

Already Holec (1979: 29-30) noted that in order to foster autonomy among learners, the teachers have to redefine their roles. Holec (1979: 30) describes teachers, who promote autonomous language learning, as not just replaceable "teaching machines", but people who have a meaningful relationship with the learners. These new roles are also noted by Nordlund (1997: 87-88) who argued that different teachers need different amount of times in adapting to these new ways of working, and that not all teachers are or should be suitable for adapting them. However, Holec (1979) believes strongly in the positive outcome when setting towards the path of learner autonomy:

> the teacher will find his new role becomes more varied rather than curtailed, strengthened rather than weakened (not in terms of authority but in terms of competence) and much greater demands will made to his creativity than on his highly developed knowledge of teaching techniques. (Holec 1979: 30)

Holec (1979: 30-31) also notes that if we want to promote learner autonomy in our school systems, it creates new demands for teacher training. This is why this study was also aimed at teacher trainees, in order to get a perspective on the current teacher training in Finland.

Dam (2011), based on her 30 years of working experience with autonomous classrooms, mentions how versatile and irreplaceable the role of a teacher is in the autonomous classroom. The basic assumption underlining the process of becoming an autonomous teacher is based on learner centred ideology. Dam sums this up with the following description:

> In a traditional teacher-directed teaching environment, teachers ask themselves: *How do I best teach this or that?* In a learner-centred learning environment, teachers ask themselves: *How do I best support my learners in learning this or that?* (Italics by original) (Dam 2011: 43)

Dam (2011: 43) argues that in order to foster autonomy the teacher has to offer five elements for the learners. First of all the teacher has to offer choice for the learners, which will motivate them. These options need to be reflected so that they will heighten the awareness about learning as well as making the learners feel more responsible for their learning and increase their self-esteem. Secondly, the teacher has to offer clear guidelines for the learners, for instance what is required of them or what restrictions the curriculum sets. As argued by Dam (2011: 43), learners will not be willing to take over the decisions regarding their learning unless they feel secure about what is expected and demanded from them. Thirdly, as the focus has to be on learning rather than on teaching, the teacher should introduce exercises where all learners can add something to the activity as well as gain from it. Fourthly, Dam argues for the importance of using the target language and using it genuinely, for instance avoiding asking questions the teacher already knows the answer for. Lastly, the teacher has to include learners into the evaluation process. This is according to Dam one the most important parts of fostering autonomy. In order to be able to do evaluation themselves, the learners need to be given tools and reasons for using them. Dam (2011: 45) also notes that it is crucial that this evaluation is continuous and daily. Dam recognises the possible difficulties when trying to reach this way of teaching, for instance teachers often feel reluctant to hand power over to the learners. For it to become successful, a strong level of trust and security has to be had on both parties:

> On the one hand, she has to make the learners *willing* to take over the responsibility for planning their own learning, for carrying out the plans and for evaluating the outcome. At the same time, she has to support them in becoming *capable* of doing so. Experience has shown that it is especially difficult for the teacher *to let go* i.e. pass over responsibility to the learners in this process whereas it seems easier for the learners *to take over*. For both parts it is of utmost importance that they feel secure during the course of action which will have to take place step by step. (Italics by original) (Dam 2011: 41)

According to Dam the teacher can start the transition towards creating an autonomous classroom by offering these five elements, choice, guidelines, focusing on the learning, genuine target language use and involving learners in the evaluation. Dam (2011) emphasizes how it is the teacher who is actually responsible for the process as well as the results in an autonomous classroom, so the initial change must come from the teacher.

Similarly to Dam, Nunan (1997) emphasizes the important role of teachers in promoting learner autonomy. Nunan (1997) argues that as autonomy requires the learner to make the decisions relating to his/her studies, it is important that these decisions lead the learner to the right direction in regard of his/her studies and that this skill develops at different speeds and ways with different learners. Moreover, it is noted that learners need help in order to make the right decisions, as they do not necessarily know, at least in the beginning, what to do and what decisions to make (Nunan 1997: 194). It is then the teacher who needs to foster this gradual development of learner autonomy.

Teaching is often affected by the personal history of the teacher, as in how s/he was taught in school and how s/he sees that history. Moreover, without personal experiences on autonomous language learning the concept might be more difficult to grasp. Little (2007: 27) argues that teachers should have personal experience on what it is to be an autonomous learner, in order for them to be able to foster it among their learners:

> it is unreasonable to expect teachers to foster the growth of autonomy in their learners if they themselves do not know what it is to be an autonomous learner (Little 2007: 27)

Moreover, teachers need to be able to use autonomous skills (such as reflecting and self-managing) and they must also learn to cope with the wider variety of language discourse an autonomous classroom produces. Little (2007: 27) calls

for teacher training to rise up to this challenge in order to avoid autonomy in language learning staying as a marginal approach.

As a conclusion it can be noted that embarking on the road of fostering autonomous language learning is by no means an easy choice for the teachers, as it requires a considerable amount of time and effort. Especially the initial stages, which can take up to two years (see for instance Lacey 2007), can test the teacher's willingness to promote autonomous language learning and it is clear that not all teachers have the means or the opportunity to fully commit to fostering autonomy.

2.3 **Fostering autonomy**

Holec (1979: 28) noted that when talking about autonomy it is better to talk about facilitating learning rather than producing learning. In the field of autonomous language learning the term fostering autonomy is used, rather than teaching autonomy, as autonomy is something that should happen inside the learner, rather than it being instructed from the outside. In this chapter I am going present some of the ways in which fostering autonomy is done in classrooms and what requirements it needs. I am also going discuss some of the difficulties faced while fostering autonomy in language learning.

Holec (1979:9) provides a good starting point, by defining two conditions that should be fulfilled in order for autonomous learning to take place:

> -firstly, the learner must have the ability to take charge of his learning, i.e. he must <u>know how</u> to make the decision which this involves,
> -secondly, there must be a learning structure in which control over the learning can be exercised by the learner, i.e. in which the learner <u>has the possibility</u> of exercising his ability to take charge (underlining by original) (Holec 1979: 9)

These two requirements, knowledge on how to take charge and the possibility to do so, are considered crucial even in the more recent definitions. Little (2009: 224) describes that an autonomous classroom should be based on three principles: learner involvement, learner reflection and target language use. Little (1995, 2009), who himself promotes the use of the European language portfolio as a tool for promoting autonomy in language learning, sees logbooks and diaries as an essential tool for autonomous classrooms. However, Little (1995, 2009) reminds that learners need help in analysing what they have written, spotting different learning habits and estimating how effective these learning habits are. This again emphasizes the social side of autonomous language learning, as learners are not simply left alone with their writing or analysing, but rather are helped along and fostered into becoming more aware.

Benson (2011: 124-196) divides autonomy in practice under six headings: Resource-based, curricula-based, technology-based, classroom-based, learner-based and teacher-based approaches, but as noted by Benson (2011: 197) "it seems likely that it [autonomy] will be fostered most effectively through a combination of approaches". This can be seen in practice as well, as the practical realisations of fostering autonomy in language learning are highly context sensitive in style and most attempts to foster autonomy are more combinations of these approaches than clear examples of one specific approach.

Many of the practical examples of fostering autonomy come from adult learners and from University level learners. Esch (2009: 28) notes that especially the university language centres have been implementing autonomy in language learning throughout the world and it is perhaps quite a natural surrounding for autonomous language learning, as a level of freedom and independence has always been a part of universities ideology. This is also the case in Finland, with for instance in the language centre of the University of Helsinki, with a project

called Autonomous Language learning Modules (ALMS). The program started in 1994, although the process leading up to it had started already in 1991. The ALMS-project is based on five points: learner awareness, contracts/projects, support groups/workshops, counselling and record-keeping and evaluation. Each of these is then divided into more detailed parts, for instance learner awareness has six points: reflection about language learning, consciousness-raising of language learning strategies, analysis of students' own strategies, analysis of language needs, the students' own objectives and making preliminary plans and thinking about areas of interest. There is time organised in the program for covering all these points. (Kjisik 1997: 34-35). The program is still running with positive results.

Dam has made a long career with fostering autonomous language learning among teenage pupils with highly successful results (Dam 1994, 2000, 2011, Dam and Legenhousen 1996, Dam and Legenhausen 2011). Dam defines an autonomous language learning environment as follows:

> I define a learning-centred environment as one in which the teachers' knowledge about language learning – what to learn and how to learn – is combined with the learners' knowledge about themselves, their background, their likes and dislikes, their needs, and their preferred learning styles. To me a learning-centred environment is an environment in which the learners are:
> - given the possibility of being consciously involved in their own learning;
> - expected to be actively engaged in their own learning and thus made aware of the different elements involved in the learning process – an awareness to be made use of in other contexts. (Dam, 2000: 20)

In addition to this, Dam (1994, 2011, Dam and Legenhausen 1996) argues that the crucial point of successful autonomous language classroom is involving the students in continuous and regular evaluation. In addition, Dam (2011) mentions ways that have been useful for her in fostering autonomy in her

classrooms. First of all, as already discussed in the previous chapter the role of the teacher is crucial, and that the teacher is explicit in what s/he is doing, why s/he is doing it and what s/he is expecting from the learners. Secondly, Dam mentions that organising the classroom in groups enables the pupils to use peer support as well as allows the teacher to be more independent. Thirdly, the use of logbooks, posters and portfolios allows the learners and teachers to easily follow and evaluate their progress. Dam also mentions that in order for the autonomous classroom to work, it is important to include the parents by telling them how and why an autonomous classroom works. Work done by Dam clearly shows that autonomy is also appropriate for school settings.

Nunan (1997) has provided us with a five stage model for implementing autonomy in classrooms. The model by Nunan (1997) consists of five levels that can overlap and develop in non-linear manner. These levels are awareness, involvement, intervention, creation and transcendence. Even though the model offers clear stages, Nunan notes that implementing learner autonomy is a gradual change that does not have to require big alterations to the current classroom practises, and ultimately is depended on the situation:

> How far one goes, or wants to go, in encouraging learner autonomy
> will be dictated by the context and environments in which the
> teaching and learning takes place (Nunan, 1997:201)

Like said, the five levels of Nunan's model can happen simultaneously or at different times and do not necessarily develop in a linear manner. However, usually what happens first is the raising of awareness. At awareness level learners are:

> made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the programme
> and encouraged to identify the learning strategies implicit in the
> tasks (Nunan, 1997: 196)

After making learners aware the next step in Nunan's model is to involve them in making different decisions at involvement level, where learners are:

> involved in making choices from a range of goals, a selection of content and a variety of tasks (Nunan 1997 :198)

At this stage Nunan stresses that the actual choosing is the most important part, even more important than the task itself. The third level in Nunan's model is intervention and by this Nunan means that learners are:

> involved in modifying and adapting goals, content and learning tasks (Nunan 1997:199)

The fourth level, creation, is then a stage where learners can "create their own goals, content and learning tasks" (Nunan 1997:199). Nunan notes that this stage, like the others as well, can be reached gradually, by allowing the learners to first partly develop tasks for instance based on given examples. The final level, transcendence, is the level where learners have become truly autonomous and able to apply what they have learned in school in everyday life (Nunan 1997: 200-201).

As fostering autonomy does not provide a clear model to follow, it is often criticised and opposed in the school context. In addition, this criticism is often based on false beliefs about what learner autonomy means, such as allowing the learners to do whatever they want (Dam 2011: 41). Little (1991) has listed arguments teachers have against fostering autonomy and difficulties faced while trying to foster autonomy among learners. These are restrictions caused by the curriculum, restrictions caused by exams and the idea that some parts of a language need to be taught, i.e. limitations in the content. However, Little (1991) argues that these are actually false fears, as first of all the syllabus is usually not so restricting that it would be an actual lesson plan for every lesson, but the teacher is always able to make some individual decisions. Dam (2011)

reminds how in school context some restrictions caused by the curriculum have to be taken into consideration but, as long as the learners are made aware of these restrictions, autonomy can occur within the boundaries of the curriculum. Moreover, as mentioned for instance by Kjisik (1997:15) in Finland, especially at University level, teachers enjoy a substantial amount of freedom. In addition, I would argue that the national curriculum allows ample freedom in the school context as well (POPS 2004). Secondly, teachers often mention that exams make them teach certain things, but again we are faced with the argument that most of the exams are actually content and form free, therefore allowing the teacher and the students to bring in their own agenda. Moreover, having exams does not prevent involving the learners in continuous evaluation. Comparative studies between traditional mainstream education and autonomous language learning show how learners actually learn more with autonomous language learning (Dam and Legenhausen 1996). Intertwined with these practical obstacles are the beliefs teachers have about teaching and learning. Even though in many instances beliefs have an effect on our actions, Barcelos and Kalaja (2011) also mention how beliefs have a complex nature, and beliefs and action are not always linked directly.

As a final point I will mention some of the possible pitfalls, mentioned by Dam (2011: 49-50), to be avoided while fostering autonomy in the 21st century. She remarks how teachers should remember to use authentic language, support learning rather than to teach and avoid excuses such as lack of time or the use of course books to prevent autonomous language learning to develop.

2.4 How to measure autonomy in language learning

In this chapter I am going to talk about the difficulties found while trying to measure autonomy. In addition, I am going to briefly describe some of the studies done about autonomous language learning.

The most famous example of a comparative study between traditional school and autonomous language learning is by Dam and Legenhausen (1996), who compared the autonomous classroom taught by Dam to a normal German classroom. They found that the learners from an autonomous classroom used the language in a more varied manner than the learners from a mainstream classroom. Little mentions that

> They have provided a wealth of evidence to show how and why Dam's approach is more successful than mainstream teacher-led approaches (see, e.g., Dam and Legenhausen 1996, Legenhausen 1999a, 1999b, 1999c). (Little (n.d.) online)

Legenhausen has continued to provide data on the topic, mostly with data collected on the project called LAALE (Language Acquisition in an Autonomous Learning Environment) (Legenhausen 2001: 57).

Autonomy is generally discussed as having different degrees, and learners becoming 'more' or 'less' autonomous over time, and as Benson (2011: 65) notes this implies that we have at least some 'intuitive scale' for measuring autonomy. However, more precise scale of autonomy is not available, because of the individual nature of autonomy. Benson provides us with an example of this:

> At the risk of over-simplification, one learner may be good at drawing up and following study plans using self-access materials, while another may be good at creating opportunities for interaction with target language speakers. Learners may also call upon different aspects of autonomy as different situations demand them. We might want to say that these learners are 'equally' autonomous, although they are, in fact, autonomous in different and possibly non-comparable, ways (Benson 2011: 66)

Benson notes that in order to measure autonomy we have to be able to determine the components autonomy consists of. However, the problem lies with the fact that not all the elements are visible (Benson 2011: 65-66). Moreover, Breen and Mann (1997: 141) discuss the possible danger of creating situations where learners start to wear a 'mask of autonomous behaviour', which means that learners learn to imitate the kind of behaviour the teacher requires them to perform, instead of genuinely becoming autonomous. According to Benson (2011: 68-69) there has not yet been a reliable method of testing autonomy, but what can be seen from the current study is that the tests need to be context-sensitive and usually suitable only for single use. It would seem that rather than being able to give an accurate scale of learners' autonomy, we are able collect and record the personal experiences of learners. This method has been used for instance by Karlsson (1997) and Nordlund (1997) in the ALMS-project at the University of Helsinki.

All though an important area of study, measuring autonomy as such is not the focus of this study. Rather than trying to measure levels of autonomy or compare it to other learning styles, the current study studied the attitudes and preparedness of teachers, teacher trainees and learners towards autonomy even before they necessarily had experienced autonomous learning.

3   DATA AND METHOD

This chapter describes the present study. Firstly, the aims of the current study are stated. Secondly, the design of each questionnaire is described. Following this the process of analysis is defined. Lastly, the validity of the study is discussed.

In this study language learning and teaching was approached from two directions: from the practical side and from the ideological side. With the practical side this study tried to figure out what teachers and learners actually do in classrooms and whether these reflect autonomous classroom habits, for instance if learners make decisions about their learning. With the ideological side first of all the familiarity of the concept was studied and secondly the attitudes towards promoting learner autonomy were looked into.

This study could be described as descriptive in nature, a mixture between a survey and a case study. Descriptive research tries to describe a phenomenon and provide more information about it. It is based on using reliable data collecting methods and scientific classification of the results. As there were no previous studies done on this particular topic in Finland and as I wanted to gain a comprehensive view for instance of the familiarity of the term among teachers, with a descriptive study I was able to reach a wider group of participants.

The data for the present study was collected during March and April 2012 through internet questionnaires and it reached altogether 201 participants ranging from 14 year old lower secondary school pupils to 64 year old teachers. Three groups were selected to answer the questionnaire: teachers, teacher trainees and pupils, and each group had their own questionnaire (see

appendixes 1, 2 and 3). The English teachers were selected from schools all over Finland from elementary, high and upper secondary schools, with email addresses found from the schools' web pages. The English teacher trainees were from the University of Jyväskylä and the pupils were from an average size school from central Finland, with two classes from lower secondary school and two classes from upper secondary school. The questionnaires were done in Finnish to make sure language would not be influencing the answers, as the mother tongue of the majority of the participants was Finnish. In addition to the questionnaires, 12 English lessons were observed in a secondary and upper secondary school in Jyväskylä. However, the notes made from these lessons served mainly as inspiration for the questionnaires.

3.1 **Aim of the present study**

The purpose of this study was to map out the familiarity of autonomous language learning in Finland and the attitudes teachers, teacher trainees and pupils have towards autonomous language learning. Even though interest towards autonomous language learning has risen remarkably during the 21st century (Benson 2011) there have not been previous studies in Finland that would have tried to map out the familiarity of the term among teachers and teacher trainees. The study was based on two hypotheses. The first one was that even though discussed a lot in the EFL-field, the concept of autonomous language learning is not that commonly known among the Finnish teachers and teacher trainees. The second hypothesis was that the majority of the Finnish classrooms are currently not autonomous in nature. The research questions were as follows:

- How familiar are teachers and teacher trainees with the concept of learner autonomy?

- How willing and prepared are the participants to promote learner autonomy?

  o What possible pro autonomous *skills* teachers, teacher trainees and pupils might already possess?
  o Are the participants *attitudes* more pro autonomous or non-autonomous?

I chose to do a questionnaire for the following reasons. Even though data collected through interviews would have given me more in-depth answers these would have most likely led me to highly individual experiences. With the quantitative method a larger amount of participants was reached, therefore giving a better understanding of the overall situation of language education in Finland. Benefits of questionnaires mentioned by Dörnyei and Tagutchi (2010), such as cost-efficiency and versatility also apply to this study. Dörnyei and Tagutchi (2010) also point out disadvantages found with questionnaires, for instance simplicity and superficiality of answers, unreliable and unmotivated respondents, respondent literacy problems and fatigue effects (Dörnyei and Tagutchi, 2010: 6-9). The questionnaires were designed in order to minimize the disadvantage factors, for example with keeping the length reasonable and the questions short and simple. The questionnaire also entailed open ended answers, allowing the participants to explain their answers.

Teacher trainees and pupils were included in this study in order to reach a more holistic view. I wanted to compare the opinions of teachers to the teacher trainees, who will be working as teachers in the future, and to find out if their values and ideas about teaching were similar or not. In addition, one of the goals was to try and see whether the current training offers any tools for future teachers to foster autonomy in language learning in their classrooms. I also

wanted to include the opinions of pupils in order to gain a more holistic view of the classroom situations. With this study I hoped to gain a glimpse of how the language classroom and language learning is perceived from different participants' viewpoints, and how close or how far these views are from autonomous language learning.

3.2 The questionnaires

In all of the questionnaires there were background questions, such as age and gender. Questions asking to describe the perceived tasks of teachers and pupils in classrooms were also included in all of the questionnaires. The questions were aimed to reveal what kind of attitudes and expectations the participants have towards the teachers and pupils in classrooms, and whether these attitudes would reflect more the traditional roles of teachers and pupils or maybe more autonomous roles. The aim was to find out whether certain key elements of autonomous classrooms, such as involving learners into decision making or in the evaluation process, would be present in the classrooms and how the participants responded to these ideas. In addition to these common questions, all of the questionnaires had group-specific closed and open ended questions. Most of the open ended questions were offered as an option to specify the answers and most of the closed questions were modified Likert scale questions, that could be answered with options: 'agree', 'disagree' or 'cannot say'.

3.2.1 Group A: The questionnaire for teachers

The questionnaire for teachers consisted of altogether 19 questions, of which four dealt with background (age, gender and the length of their teaching careers as well as the level in which they currently worked), 6 were open-ended and 9 close-ended questions. The majority of the open ended questions were not

compulsory and were given after close-ended questions as an option if the teachers wanted to clarify their answers. Only two of the open-ended questions were compulsory: teachers were asked to describe what they considered their main tasks in a classroom, as well as what they considered to be the main tasks of the pupils.

The questionnaire studied how well known the term 'autonomy in language learning' is among teachers. Questions 13 and 14 (see appendix 1) asked whether teachers know the term 'autonomy in language learning' and if yes, what their understanding of the term is by asking them to briefly describe it.

Teachers' current practises were mainly asked by four close-ended questions (questions 7, 8, 9 and 10, see appendix 1) that were taken from Kumaravadivelu (2001: 150-151). He offers them as a tool for teachers in assessing their own current level of autonomy. I used it for the same purpose, in order to find out how autonomous the teachers currently are with their classrooms. Kumaravadivelu (2001: 150) asks the teachers to estimate their behaviour on four areas of teaching: goals, activities, evaluation and materials. Each of these areas has five example situations ranging from "5=no promotion of learner autonomy to 1=substantial promotion of learner autonomy". The scale provided by Kumaravadivelu was translated into Finnish for the questionnaire. Even though the scale created by Kumaravadivelu gives us a clear indication whether a classroom is providing suitable surroundings for autonomy to develop, other questions were added to the questionnaire in order to get a better understanding of the opinions and willingness of teachers.

Next part of the questionnaire was designed in order to gain knowledge on how willing the teachers were towards promoting autonomy in their classrooms. The questions were interested about whether the teachers feel there would be need for this type of teaching and whether this type of teaching is

possible. Question 11 (see appendix 1) was a straight-forward question on how often teachers offered options for pupils for achieving the goals of the lesson. This was followed with an open ended question which asked the teacher to specify what choices were usually offered (see question 12, appendix 1). Although autonomy is not achieved by simply giving choices for pupils (see for instance Little 2007) it can be a starting point and can reflect the ideology of involving pupils into making decisions about their studies. Questions 15 and 16 mapped out the underlying attitudes, with the simple yes/no question of whether teachers feel pupils have enough power over their studies and the possibility to explain their answers with an open-ended question. Questions 17 and 18 were multiple choice questions trying to pinpoint the attitudes teachers might have towards claims that were chosen to represent autonomous or non-autonomous learning and teaching. Altogether 10 claims were presented (see appendix 1). If agreed with, these claims can be divided into pro-autonomous and non-autonomous claims as follows: non autonomous are claims number: 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9 and pro-autonomous claims are 1, 5, 6 and 10. However, it is critical to note that these claims are not as straight-forward as that. For instance, if we look at claim number 5, '*I try to create lessons that activate pupils*', which is seen here as presenting more pro-autonomous attitudes, it can also mean a situation where pupils are active but still in the total control of the teacher, in that teacher decides who does what. A situation like this would not promote autonomous behaviour for the pupils but they would still be active. However, even though the claims do leave room for interpretation, I chose to have them as they were used simply to portray the general attitudes teachers might have, for instance whether pupils being active is a positive or a negative thing.

Lastly teachers were given the option to give their free opinion on the questionnaire.

3.2.2 Group B: The questionnaire for teacher trainees

The questionnaire for teacher trainees consisted of 15 questions, of which 5 were open ended and 10 were close-ended questions. The questionnaire began with the background questions, such as age and gender. Teacher trainees were also asked to describe what they consider the main tasks of a teacher and a pupil to be in classroom. In addition, the familiarity of the term was asked as well as questions that mapped out the teacher trainees willingness and preparedness towards promoting learner autonomy. The same questions that were asked from the teachers were asked from the teacher trainees as well, in order to see if their answers would be similar or not. For instance, question 5 (see appendix 2) asked whether the participants feel pupils have enough power over their own studying in classrooms. The open ended part was left out of the teacher trainees' questionnaire, as the majority of them only would have limited classroom experience. Moreover, questions 11 and 12, which consisted of altogether 10 claims, asked teacher trainees to consider different claims relating to their own teaching practices and beliefs. These beliefs could also be categorized into being pro-autonomous or non-autonomous.

In addition, questions concerning teacher trainees' own studying habits were asked, as according to Little (1995, 2007) teachers need to have experienced autonomy in their own learning in order to be able to use it effectively in their own teaching. That is why I wanted to find out whether the current teacher training offers skills for promoting learner autonomy. Questions 6, 7 and 8 consisted of altogether 15 claims (see appendix 2), and these were mapping out the participants' own learning styles, based on a set of claims created by Kumaravadivelu (2001: 153-154).

Question 13 asked the participants to evaluate their teacher training with five different statements and whether they feel they were given enough information about these during their training. Question 14 was an open ended question that

asked whether the trainees felt that they were given a certain teaching style during their training and if yes, what this style was. Lastly, an option for free comments was provided.

3.2.3 Group C: The questionnaire for pupils

The questionnaire for pupils was shorter than the others, consisting of altogether 12 questions, so that the questionnaire could be easily conducted during lessons as well as to motivate pupils to answer all the questions. After the background questions (age, sex) as well as the questions about the perceived roles and tasks of teachers and pupils in classrooms pupils were asked to describe a typical English lesson. With this questionnaire I wanted to gain the student perspective into this study.

Some of the questions were the same as questions asked from the teachers, in order to see if the results would be consistent. For instance, question number six was the same as the question number 11 for teachers, asking pupils to state how often they are offered choices for achieving the goals of a lesson.

Question number seven asked the students to state how often they self-evaluate their own success in their English studies, as reflecting on your studying is a crucial feature of successful autonomous language learning (see for instance Little, Dam, ALMS). The next seven questions (questions 8-14) consisted of claims about their own learning. The majority of the claims were taken from Kumaravadivelu (2001: 153-154) where he offers them as a tool for assessing your personal level of autonomy. Claims trying to unravel the beliefs about learning were also added, such as '*all pupils should do the same exercises*'. Naturally, it was not possible to map out all the possible learning methods or beliefs used by the pupils with the scope of this survey. It was more important to see whether the pupils are aware of different learning methods and whether

they are used to adapting, or even allowed to adapt, the tasks they do during English lessons.

3.3 **Analyses**

The data was processed using the SPSS-program. First descriptive tables from all the answers were created and these are all provided in the appendixes (see appendix 4, 5 and 6). With the open ended questions the answers were categorised into groups, 'pro-autonomous', 'non-autonomous' and 'both', so that tables could be formed. Secondly correlations between the participant's background information and their answers were examined. After first looking at each participant group individually they were then finally compared to each other.

3.4 **Validity**

Validity is paramount in scientific research. Questionnaires and studies should be reliable and repeatable. Careful consideration was paid in order to create a study that would meet these standards. In this chapter I am going to present the steps taken to ensure the validity of this study.

First of all, all the questionnaires were anonymous in nature, as it was thought that the participants will share their experiences more freely if they are not named. As discussed by Dörneyi and Tagutchi (2010: 17-18 and 71-82) anonymity can sometimes hinder the study process as the participants cannot later be identified, but for this particular study this was not an issue. All the participants were informed about the anonymity in the beginning of the questionnaire. Repetitive questions were used to test the reliability of the answers. Secondly, the goal was to reach a varied and large test group which

would give as complete a picture of the situation as possible. This was done with two approaches. First, by involving three groups, who are all involved in school life, and secondly addressing a varied and a large participant group within each individual group. This was best reached with group A, as teachers were the biggest participant group. The questionnaire was sent to teachers all over Finland and teachers also represented different size schools, and they also varied in age and in the length of their careers. The teacher trainees were all selected from the University of Jyväskylä, which limits the results, as teacher trainees from other universities could have offered other results. The pupils represented two age groups, lower secondary and upper secondary school. Thirdly, the questions were carefully selected for this particular study. Some of the questions were based on questions created by Kumaravadivelu (2001) and the other questions were created after reading extensively from the field of autonomy in language learning. In addition, the notes made during the observed English lessons helped to form relevant questions. In addition, the questionnaires were tested and modified based on the feedback gotten from the test group, before sending it to the participants. The test group consisted of fellow students from the University of Jyväskylä. However, the test group did not include younger learners or teachers.

4   RESULTS

This chapter presents the results found in this study. The results are presented under subheadings that correspond to the research questions and the answers of all participant groups are reported together. Naturally this kind of division is somewhat forced as all the things are related to each other and overlap. However, for the purpose of clarity and structure it was considered useful.The results are presented in most cases by telling the percentage number as well as the numeric amount of the participants and tables and quotations are provided when thought necessary. A discussion of the results is provided in chapter five. Before moving into the results the background factors and their influence on the answers is discussed.

4.1   **Participants' background factors**

All of the participants were asked to answer background questions, such as gender and age, in order to find out whether these had influence on the participants answers. Based on this study the background questions asked had no statistical effect on the participants' answers. This is presented with a few examples in this chapter. However, the background questions gave valuable information about the participants, and these results are summarised in this chapter.

The largest participant group were the teachers. The total number of teachers who participated in the study was 89. From these 7 were men and 82 were women. The average age between the participants was 46.9 years, with the youngest being 26 years old and the oldest 64 years old. The average number of years the participants had worked as a teacher was 20 years (19.91 years), the

shortest career was two years and the longest was 38 years. The different school levels were portrayed surprisingly equally, with 28 teachers working in upper secondary school, 37 in lower secondary school and 29 in elementary school. Teachers could report that they currently work on more than one school level, and 5 participants reported this.

The smallest participant group was the teacher trainees. The teacher trainees selected to answer the questionnaire were all students at the University of Jyväskylä and the overall number of participants answering the questionnaire successfully was 53, of which 47 were female and 6 were male. The average age of participants was 24. 2 years, the youngest being 19 years old and the oldest 48 years old. However, with the teacher trainees, the age groups were so close to each other (majority only had differences of one or two years) that no age groups could be formed.

The third participant group, the pupils, were the second largest group. The total number of pupils answering the questionnaire was 59 and the average age of the participants was 16. 2 years, ranging from 14 to 19 year olds. Only with this participant group the sexes were equally represented, as the number of male participants was 29 and the number of female participants was 30. However, gender did not have a statistical differentiation on the results.

The background factors asked in these questionnaires had no statistical differentiation on the answers given. For instance, with the question on whether the participants were familiar with the term 'autonomy in language learning' 11 of the 28 teachers working at upper secondary level said yes. The equivalent numbers among lower secondary school teachers were 8/37 and 7/29, so the highest difference was five participants which is not enough to create a statistically significant difference. Moreover, table one below shows the

teachers answers to the familiarity of the term 'autonomy in language learning' compared with the age of the participants.

Table 1. Group A. Are you familiar with the term 'autonomy in language learning'? * Age Groups Cross tabulation

			Age Groups			
			- 40	41-50	51-	Total
Are you familiar with the term 'autonomy in language learning'?	Yes	Count	7	8	10	25
		% within Age Group	31,8%	22,9%	31,3%	28,1%
	No	Count	15	27	22	64
		% within Age Group	68,2%	77,1%	68,8%	71,9%
Total		Count	22	35	32	89
		% within Age Group	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

As we can see from the table one the results between age groups are equally represented, which means that age was not a statistically differentiating factor. Among the teacher trainees and teachers the number of male participants was so small that no statistical differentiation could be made based on the sex of the participants. In addition, the other background questions, the length of the teaching career, the school level the teachers worked at and the age of the participants, had no statistical effect on the answers. As this was the case with all the questions and all the participant groups, not all of the tables are presented here.

4.2 **Participants familiarity with the term 'autonomy in language learning'**

One of the purposes of this study was to find out how familiar teachers and teacher trainees were with the term 'autonomy in language learning'. In addition to asking them whether they recognise the term, if they were familiar with it, they were also asked to briefly describe what they understand with the term. The majority of the participants were not familiar with the term 'autonomy in language learning' and this is discussed next in more detail.

In question 13 (see appendix 1) teachers were asked if they were familiar with the term 'autonomy in language learning' and 71. 9% (N = 64) of the teachers reported that they were not familiar with the term. As shown in table 2, only 28.1% (N = 25) of the teachers reported that they were familiar with the term.

Table 2. Teachers' familiarity with the term 'autonomy in language learning'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	25	28,1	28,1	28,1
	No	64	71,9	71,9	100,0
	Total	89	100,0	100,0	

However, double the amount, 56.2 % (N = 50), of the participants answered the open-ended question that asked them to describe what they understand with the term. Out of these, 6 stated clearly that they do not know what that term means, or that they have forgotten what it means. In addition, two of these answers only mentioned that they do not think it will be suitable for elementary level education, but did not specify how they understand the term. After the 6

zero answers, there were still 44 answers that could be looked at. Out of these, altogether 11 of the teachers mentioned in their answers that they were not sure about their understanding of the term, or that they were simply guessing based on the previous questions of the questionnaire. The majority of the 44 answers associated autonomous language learning with independent language learning (40/44). A typical sample of this group is provided with example one:

(1) Describe what you understand with the term 'autonomous language learning'. Male, 38 years, elementary school.

> "Itsenäistä kielten opiskelua"
> "Independent language learning"

The majority of the answers, 40/44, fell under this category. However, 10 of the teachers used word choices that showed a wider understanding of the term, for instance that it is a *process* that learners are involved in *actively*, and that learners are involved in the *evaluation* process as well. Within this group, the complexity of the term was mentioned clearly by one of the participants, who is presented here with example 2.

(2) Describe what you understand with the term 'autonomous language learning'. Male, 56 years, upper secondary school.

> "Olen kuullut termin ja käsittääkseni sen tarkka määrittely on vaikeaa. Ymmärrän sen niin, että opiskelijalla on mahdollisuus vaikuttaa omaa opiskelua ja oppimista koskeviin työtapoihin ja menetelmiin liittyviin päätöksiin. Hän myös ymmärtää opiskelun tarkoituksen ja ottaa siitä vastuuta"
> "I have heard the term and as I understand defining the term precisely is difficult. I understand the term so that the student has opportunities to influence the methods of his/her own learning. S/he also understands the meaning of studying and takes responsibility for it."

The role of the teachers was only mentioned by three of the participants. One teacher mentioned that she thinks autonomous language learning would be too demanding for a teacher who cannot give individualized teaching for 25 pupils and that part of the pupils are not able to take charge of their own learning. See example 3.

(3) Describe what you understand with the term 'autonomous language learning'. Female, 58 years, lower secondary school.

> "Autonomy viittaa todennäköisesti suurempaan vapauteen ja itsenäisyyteen kielen oppimisessa. 9. luokan lopputyön aikana tämä toteutuu parhaiten käytännössä. Osa oppilaista ei kyllä pysty ottamaan vastuuta oppimisestaan ja käytännössä luokkatilanteessa ope ei repeä kahdeksikymmmeneksiviideksi, vaan kyllä monet asiat on opetettava opettajajohtoisesti. Pari- ja ryhmätöissä osa oppilaista ei saa juuri mitään aikaan, kun taas osa tarttuu toimeen hanakkaasti. Kirjo on mieletön."
>
> "Autonomy is probably referring to a greater liberty and independency in language learning. This is reached best during the 9th grades final work. Some of the learners are not capable of taking responsibility for their learning and in practice in the classroom the teacher cannot split into twenty-five, so a lot of things have to be taught in a teacher centred way. In pair or group work some learners do hardly anything, whereas some work enthusiastically. The spectrum is huge."

The two other participants, who mentioned teachers' roles in their definitions of autonomous language learning, mentioned that in their opinion in this type of learning the role of the teacher is more of an instructor or a guide.

Among the teacher trainees 79. 2% (N = 42) of the participants were not familiar with the term 'autonomy in language learning' (question 9, appendix 2). Only 20. 8% (N = 11) of the participants reported that they were familiar with the term. If they were familiar with the term, the teacher trainees were asked to describe shortly what they understood with the term (question 10, appendix 2). It was optional and even though only 11/53 participants reported that they

were familiar with the term, 32/53 of them answered to the explanation part. Out of these 10/32 reported clearly that they were not sure about the definition, and 5/32 offered a straight translation of the term, without deeper analysis or explanation. However, 5/32 of the participants reported a wider perception of the term, which can be seen for instance with examples 4 below.

(4) Teacher trainees' understanding of the term 'autonomy in language learning'. Female, 26 years.

> "Oppimisen itseohjautuvuutta ja omaan oppimiseen aktiivista vaikuttamista. Oppimistaan voi merkittävästi tehostaa reflektoimalla omia oppimistapojaan ja laajentamalla oppimista luokkahuoneen ulkopuolelle. Antamalla oppilaille enemmän määräysvaltaa oppimiseensa, he voivat löytää itselleen sopivia oppimismuotoja ja –strategioita."
> "self-directed learning and actively influencing one's own learning. One can enhance ones learning remarkably by reflecting and by learning outside the classroom. By giving more power over their studying to the pupils, they can find learning methods and strategies that are more suitable for them."

However, teacher trainees also provided some completely false beliefs about autonomous language learning, for instance stating that 'teacher has no control over the studying' or that 'the teacher is more in the background', as seen with example 5 below.

(5) Teacher trainees' understanding of the term 'autonomy in language learning'

> "Itsenäistä opiskelua, jossa opiskelija itse hakee kohteen ja tarkoituksen kielenopiskelulle. Opettajalta haetaan asiantuntijan neuvoa oma-aloitteisesti, mutta opettajalla ei ole sinänsä mitään päätäntävaltaa opiskelusta (ei kotitehtäviä, poissaolojen laskemista jne.) Arvioinnin suorittaa opettaja, mikä on tietenkin todella haastavaa."
> "independent learning, where the learner himself seeks out the goal and meaning for the language learning. Teacher is used for unprompted expert advice, but the teacher does not have any power over the studying (no homework, checking who is absent and so on)

The evaluation is done by the teacher, which obviously is extremely challenging."

As a summary it can be stated that within the scope of this study the clear majority of the participants were not familiar with the term 'autonomy in language learning' and that their understanding of the term was limited. For example, of all the answers there were altogether only 15/76 answers that were compatible for instance with definitions provided by Little or Holec or Benson. The majority of the definitions described autonomous language learning as independent learning where the learner has complete control over everything s/he does.

4.3 Autonomy in classrooms and in teacher training

The second research question focused on the current classroom situations and practices, and whether they have some similar features with autonomous language learning. In addition, the attitudes the participants were studied in order to see if they would be open for promoting autonomous language learning. These were approached as two separate phenomenon, as even if a participant did currently work in a non-autonomous environment it does not necessarily mean that they have non-autonomous attitudes and vice versa. The topic was approached in two ways. Firstly, by asking the participants to describe their current classroom practises. Secondly, the participants were asked to answer series of claims, which were about the attitudes towards learning and teaching. Questions were modified to take each participant group and their situation into consideration, for instance with teachers the focus was on their current teaching practises and with teacher trainees the focus was in the training they had received.

There were four main question groups that studied how autonomous or non-autonomous English classrooms currently are. First of all, participants were asked to describe briefly what teachers and students do in a classroom. Secondly, participants were asked about classroom practises they use, for instance they were asked how often they offer choices for pupils. Thirdly learners were asked to describe a normal language lesson and lastly teacher trainees were asked to answer claims about the current training.

All the participants were asked to describe the main tasks teachers and pupils have in a classroom. With teachers and teacher trainees the answers were grouped under three groups, non-autonomous, autonomous or both, so that tables could be formed. The categorising was done in the following manner. Answers containing words such as *teach/teaching, keeping the order, giving/planning/checking tasks, order group/pair work, work as management* were considered to reflect a more teacher orientated way of working. Answers containing words such as *guide/guiding, supporting, providing material/opportunities, developing learning skills and motivating* were considered to reflect more pro-autonomous, learner centred teaching style. Obviously not all of these teachers/teacher trainees would describe themselves as teachers who promote autonomous language learning, but the answers were interpreted to show habits that could even non-intentionally promote autonomy to take place. Based on this classification, as seen in table 3, the majority of the teachers described their roles with non-autonomous words (48. 3 % (N =43)). However, it is worth noting that the combined number of results from the 'pro-autonomous' and 'both' categories was 50. 5% (N = 45), creating a slight majority.

Table 3. Teachers categorised answers on teachers' main tasks in a classroom.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Non-autonomous	43	48,3	48,3	48,3
	Autonomous	21	23,6	23,6	71,9
	Both	24	27,0	27,0	98,9
	Unclassified	1	1,1	1,1	100,0
	Total	89	100,0	100,0	

As said, similar categorising was used with the teacher trainees' answers, and highly similar results were gained from their answers. The results show that the majority of the answers fell under the non-autonomous grouping, as shown in table 4.

Table 4. Teacher trainees categorised answers on teachers' main tasks in a classroom

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	non-autonomous	27	50,9	50,9	50,9
	autonomous	5	9,4	9,4	60,4
	both	21	39,6	39,6	100,0
	Total	53	100,0	100,0	

The pupils were asked to describe what they think are typical tasks of a teacher in a classroom. With pupils a similar categorising of answers was done, with answers containing words such as *teach*, *decide* or *give instructions* were considered to represent more non-autonomous, teacher orientated way of working (see example 6), and answers containing words such as *guiding*, *leading* or *helping* more autonomous, learner centred working methods (see example 7).

(6) Example of a non-autonomous view on teachers' task in a classroom. Male, 18 years.

"Päättää, mitkä ovat tärkeitä asioita oppia ja opettaa ne mahdollisimman hyvin."
"To decide what are important things to learn and teach them as well as possible."

(7) Example of autonomous view on teachers' task in a classroom. Female, 17 years.

"Johdattaa uusiin asioihin, auttaa ymmärtämään"
"To guide into new things, help to understand"

A clear majority of the pupils simply answered that the main task of the teacher is to *teach*, which meant that the results were more non-autonomous in nature, which can be seen in table 5.

Table 5. Pupils categorised answers on teachers' main tasks in a classroom

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	non-autonomous	41	69,5	69,5	69,5
	autonomous	9	15,3	15,3	84,7
	both	9	15,3	15,3	100,0
	Total	59	100,0	100,0	

As a summary all the participant groups had similar answers and the main tasks of a teacher in a classroom seems to be *keeping order, planning and giving activities* and *checking*, in other words *to teach* in a more teacher centred way. Based on these results in the majority of the cases the status quo is still a teacher orientated classroom situation. The main differences between the answers were the high number of teachers who mentioned that their main job is to keep order, this was mentioned by notably smaller amount of the other two participant

groups. Teachers also mentioned upbringing as part of their job, and this was only mentioned by few teacher trainees and none of the pupils.

Participants were also asked to describe briefly what they consider to be the learners' main tasks in a classroom. These answers were classified into the same three groups: non-autonomous, autonomous or both. Answers containing phrases such *following orders, listening to the teacher* or *doing the given tasks* were considered to reflect a non-autonomous classroom. Answers containing words such as *active participation*, *taking responsibility* or *learning to learn* were considered to reflect more pro-autonomous attitudes. Responses were also grouped under the category 'both', for instance answers such as *studying actively*, as it is impossible to tell if this *active studying* is done by following teachers' orders or by through more autonomous methods. Based on this division the majority of the teachers' answers were ambiguous in nature and therefore fell under the group 'both', which formed 66. 3% (N = 59) of the answers. In table 6 it can be seen that the second biggest group was formed with the answers that were categorised as non-autonomous.

Table 6. Teachers categorized answers on pupils' tasks in a classroom.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Non-autonomous	22	24,7	24,7	24,7
	Autonomous	7	7,9	7,9	32,6
	Both	59	66,3	66,3	98,9
	Unclassified	1	1,1	1,1	100,0
	Total	89	100,0	100,0	

Teacher trainees gave again similar answers as the teachers. The biggest group was again answers that contained words such as the learners' job is to '*do activities*', '*study*' or '*work actively*', and from these it is impossible to draw conclusions on who has initiated these activities. As shown in table 7, the clear

majority of the answers, 62. 3% (N = 33), were categorized as 'both'. Only 13. 2% (N = 7) of the answers were clearly pro-autonomous in nature, for example answers that stated that the pupils' job is to take responsibility of their own learning according to their own level. In comparison, 24. 5% (N = 13) of the answers were non-autonomous in nature, as they stated for instance that the job of the pupil is to listen to orders and do the given exercises.

Table 7. Teacher trainees categorised answers on pupils' tasks in a classroom.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	non-autonomous	13	24,5	24,5	24,5
	autonomous	7	13,2	13,2	37,7
	both	33	62,3	62,3	100,0
	Total	53	100,0	100,0	

The pupils were also asked to describe what they consider their main tasks to be in a language classroom. The clear majority of the learners answered that their task is simply *to learn*, with 49/59 participants giving this as their answer. Different aspects of learning were emphasised by different participants, for instance some mentioned *learning English* and others specified *learning to speak and write English*, but other than that the variation was minimal. From the majority of the results it is impossible to see whether this *learning* is done in an autonomous manner or in a non-autonomous manner, so with learners as well, the largest result group was 'both'.

As a summary, it can be stated that all the participant groups had similar, relatively narrow ideas of the learners' role in a classroom. Based on the results the learners' job in an EFL-classroom in Finland is to learn, in other words s/he is a receiver in the learning situation. The main difference was that teachers and

teacher trainees emphasised more that learners need to take part in the activities, however, these activities come from the teacher and not from the learner.

The participants were also asked about the current classroom practises. First I am going to present the results found with the pupils, who were asked to describe briefly a typical English lesson. A vast majority of the answers received, 49/59, described a very typical lesson, where the lesson starts with a new chapter, which is then followed by some exercises and grammar. Typical examples of these answers are provided with quotes 8, 9, 10 and 11 below.

(8) Female, 17 years

"tarkistetaan kotitehtävät, käydään kappaletta läpi, tehdään suullisia ja kirjallisia tehtäviä, katsotaan kielioppia"
"checking the homework, going through the chapter, working on oral and written exercises, looking at grammar"

(9) Male, 17 years

"käydään tehtäviä, luetaan ja kuunnellaan kappaleiden tekstejä. Joskus sanakokeita, joskus kuunteluita yms."
"working on exercises, reading and listening to chapters. Sometimes vocabulary tests, sometimes listening exercises etc."

(10) Male, 14 years

"Tullaan luokkaan. aloitetaan tunti. kuunnellaan kappale. tehdään tehtäviä. pois tunnilta-"
"we come into class. Start the lesson. Listening to a chapter. Doing exercises. Leaving the lesson-"

(11) Female, 14 years

"Tunti alkaa yleensä jonkintapaisella johdannolla, (esim. kerrotaan mikä on tämän päivän järjestys) yleensä aloitamme läksyjen tarkastuksesta. Sitten tehdään jonkinlaisia tehtäviä, joko puhumalla parin kanssa tai tekemällä itse kirjallisia tehtäviä. Yleensä käytämme tunnin aikana paljon erilaisia tehtävämuotoja, kuuntelemme jne."

"Usually the lesson starts with some kind of an introduction (for instance we are told what we are going to do today) usually we start with checking the homework. Then we do some kind of exercises, either by speaking to a peer or doing written exercises. Usually we do a lot of different types of exercises during the lesson, listening etc."

The results show that the majority of the pupils experience a similar pattern in the English lessons, regardless of age or gender.

The teachers were also asked to estimate their current classroom behaviour, but in a more detailed manner, using a scale designed by Kumaravadivelu (2003). The scale has four different areas of teaching: *setting goals*, *materials*, *activities* and *evaluation*, and each of these four areas had five examples of different behaviour, ranging from non-autonomous to autonomous behaviour. The clear majority of the teachers chose the options that showed no or little promotion of autonomy. As some of the options were not chosen at all, for clarity reasons I combined the numbers of the results, so that choices from three to one, which were considered promoting learner autonomy, were counted together and options four and five, which were presenting situations that are not promoting autonomy, were combined. Fostering autonomy was mostly done with setting goals, where 15/89 of the participants chose the more autonomous choices, and with activities, where 17/89 of the participants chose the more autonomous descriptions of their classroom behaviour. With materials only 8/89 of the teachers mentioned that their current practises are more pro-autonomous and the clear majority, 81/89 of the teachers reported more non-autonomous practises. Out of these, 38 of the teachers reported that they use predetermined textbooks and 43 of the participants mentioned that in addition to these textbooks they prepare extra materials that they think will be interesting for the learners. Learner autonomy was most restricted with evaluation, with altogether only three (3/89) teachers who chose the more autonomous options.

It was clear from these results that promoting autonomous learning is not currently an everyday phenomenon in these Finnish EFL-classrooms.

In addition, teachers were asked more about their classroom practises with question 11 (appendix 1), which asked them to estimate how often they offer choices for pupils in classrooms. The majority of the teachers replied that they offer choices for pupils 'once a week' (30. 3 % (N = 27)). The second most common answer, with 24.7 %, (N = 22) was 'rarely'. However, as seen in table 8, the answers indicating positive attitudes towards offering choices (every lesson, once a week, once every two weeks or once a month) had the combined result of 74. 1 % (N = 66), indicating that even if not continuously, the majority of the participants do, from time to time, offer options to pupils.

Table 8. How often teachers offer choices for pupils.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Every lesson**	*10*	*11,2*	*11,2*	*11,2*
	Once a week	*27*	*30,3*	*30,3*	*41,6*
	Once every two weeks	*13*	*14,6*	*14,6*	*56,2*
	Once a month	*16*	*18,0*	*18,0*	*74,2*
	Never	*1*	*1,1*	*1,1*	*75,3*
	Rarely	*22*	*24,7*	*24,7*	*100,0*
	Total	*89*	*100,0*	*100,0*	

The pupils were also asked to estimate how often they are offered choices for reaching the goals of the English lesson (see appendix 3, question 6) and the results were highly similar to the ones gained from the teachers. The majority of the pupils answered that they do get options for reaching the goals of the English lessons, as the combined figures were 49/59 for answers indicating that being able to choose is fairly common in classrooms. As seen in table 9, the most popular answer was the option 'every week' which was chosen by 54. 2 % (N =

32) of the participants. However, the second highest answer was 'rarely' with 15. 3% (N = 9) of the participants answering it, and the third most common answer was the choice 'once every two weeks' (13. 6% (N = 8)).

Table 9. Pupils questionnaire: how often are you offered options for reaching the goals of your English lesson?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Every lesson	5	8,5	8,5	8,5
	Every week	32	54,2	54,2	62,7
	Once every two weeks	8	13,6	13,6	76,3
	Once a month	4	6,8	6,8	83,1
	Rarely	9	15,3	15,3	98,3
	Never	1	1,7	1,7	100,0
	Total	59	100,0	100,0	

For teachers this question was continued with an open ended question that asked them to specify with what they usually offer options for pupils. Three main groups could be formed based on the answers. The groups found were *assignments*, *working method/partner* and *timetables*. One answer from one teacher could have several points and therefore the number of answers gained overall is larger than the number of participants. The biggest group was *assignments* (82/89). The second biggest group was choices offered with *working methods* or *working partners* (27/89). The last group was choices regarding *timetables*, for instance when an exam would be held or a certain assignment would be returned, and this was mentioned by 7 teachers. Space, for example whether studying is done in a computer room or in a normal classroom and the use of language, whether English of Finnish is used, were mentioned both by one teacher each. In addition, 10 teachers mentioned that offering choices for pupils has to be based on the level and skills of the pupils.

The pupils were asked about the current classroom practises with question number 7 (appendix 3), which asked them to estimate how often they reflect their own English learning. As seen in table 10, the majority of the participants, 40. 7% (N = 24), answered 'rarely' and 39. 0% (N = 23) answered 'once a month'. These results echo the teachers' answers reporting they rarely involve students in the evaluation processes.

Table 10. How often do you assess your own success in your English studies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Every lesson	1	1,7	1,7	1,7
	Once a week	1	1,7	1,7	3,4
	Once every two weeks	7	11,9	11,9	15,3
Valid	Once a month	23	39,0	39,0	54,2
	Rarely	24	40,7	40,7	94,9
	Never	3	5,1	5,1	100,0
	Total	59	100,0	100,0	

Due to their possibly limited classroom experience, the teacher trainees were not asked about current classroom behaviour, but about their teacher training, in order to see whether they would have gained any pro-autonomous learning methods that could possibly then later on be used in classrooms. In practice this was done by offering a series of statements that tried to map out what was addressed in teacher training and if the teacher trainees felt they had been given enough information on these topics. There were 9 statements that the participants could choose to answer with 'agree', 'disagree' or 'I do not know' options. The first of these statements was '*In teacher training I was given enough information on promoting functional group work*' which was agreed with by the majority of the participants (47. 2% (N = 25)). Claim number two, '*I was given*

enough information on including pupils into decision making', was disagreed with by the majority, 58. 5% (N = 31), of the participants. When asked if teacher trainees felt they learnt enough about keeping discipline, the majority of the participants, 50. 9% (N = 27), disagreed with it. As seen in table 11, the fourth statement '*I was given enough information during my teacher training on how to make lesson plans*' was mostly agreed with, as 81. 1% (N = 43) of the participants said they agree with the claim.

Table 11. Teacher trainees answers to the claim 'I was given enough information during my teacher training on how to create lesson plans'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	43	81,1	81,1	81,1
	Disagree	4	7,5	7,5	88,7
	I do not know	6	11,3	11,3	100,0
	Total	53	100,0	100,0	

For the statement whether teacher trainees felt they were given enough information on how to provide individualized teaching the majority of the participants, 47. 2 (N = 25), disagreed with it. The next claim, '*I was given enough information during my teacher training on setting learning goals*' got fairly evenly divided answers, but the majority, 41. 5% (N = 22), of the participants agreed with it. The second highest number of agreements was gained with the claim that asked whether teacher trainees were given enough information on how to make use of materials outside the textbook. As shown in table 12, 62. 3% (N = 33) of the participants agreed with the claim, and only 20. 8 % disagreed with it.

Table 12. Teacher trainees answers to the claim 'I was given enough information during my teacher training on using materials outside the textbook'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	33	62,3	62,3	62,3
	Disagree	11	20,8	20,8	83,0
	I do not know	9	17,0	17,0	100,0
	Total	53	100,0	100,0	

Statement number eight, *'I was given enough information during my teacher training on how to take pupils opinions into consideration'*, was disagreed with by the majority of the participants (45. 3% (N = 24)). The last statement, *'I was given enough information during my teacher training on how to make use of different evaluation methods'*, was also mostly disagreed with, as 43. 3% (N = 23) of the participants felt this had not happened during their teacher training. As a summary, based on these claims and results, it would seem that the teacher training focuses mainly on lesson planning and using materials outside the textbooks and teacher trainees had not received enough information about including pupils into decision making and keeping discipline in a classroom.

The open-ended question '*did you feel that the teacher training offered a certain teaching style/method for you? If yes, what type of a style*' was answered by 45/53 of the teacher trainees. The majority of the participants felt that they were not enforced a certain style during their training, but rather were introduced to a variety of styles, mainly through different teacher mentors. Moreover, 6 out of the 45 teacher trainees mentioned that teaching is something that develops with experiences gained from working life and teacher training mostly offers a starting point on which to build. Only 8/45 participants mentioned that they

had experienced that the teaching style offered was teacher and textbook orientated whereas 11/45 participants mentioned that the 'ideal' teaching style was one where the pupils have an active part in the classroom, where all pupils are included. This is shown with example number 12, where the participant mentioned how the current teacher training does emphasize the need to move away from a strict authoritarian style of teaching, but that she did not receive enough information on other teaching styles.

(12) Teacher trainees' experience of the teacher education. Female, 24 years

> "Opettajankoulutuksessa painotettiin usein opettajajohtoisen tyylin olevan jokseenkin vanhanaikainen. En ole kuitenkaan varma, kerrottiinko meille tarpeeksi vaihtoehtoista."
> "During the teacher training it was emphasized that the teacher lead teaching style is somewhat old fashioned. However, I am not sure if we were told enough about different options."

In this chapter I have described the results found about the current situations in the EFL-classrooms as well as in the EFL-teacher training. The results covered the topic from various points of views. To summarise, currently the EFL-classrooms and teacher training does not offer enough opportunities for autonomous language learning to develop.

4.4 **Attitudes and skills**

The last part of this study looked at some of the different attitudes the participants have towards learner autonomy. The attitudes were looked at through a set of either non-autonomous beliefs or pro-autonomous beliefs claims.

Question 15 (appendix 1) asked whether teachers feel pupils have enough power in relation to their studies. Interestingly the answers were highly divided, with a slight majority that answered 'yes' (53.9 % (N = 48)) and 46.1 %

(N = 41) who felt students do not have enough power over their studies. Question 16 was offered as an optional choice for the teachers to specify their answer in question 15, '*do you think pupils have enough power relating their studies*', and it was answered by 48/89 of the participants. Most of these answers tried to explain why sharing power with pupils is restricted in classrooms and from the answers three main groups appeared. These explained the reasons for restrictions with the heterogeneity of the groups, restrictions from the curriculum and age. The pupils' different ability to take responsibility, which is apparent with the heterogeneous groups, was mentioned by 16/48 participants. Restrictions caused by the curriculum were stated by 14/48 of the teachers and the age of the pupils was mentioned by 13/48 of the teachers. Other factors teachers mentioned were the lack of resources or tools for this type of teaching (5/48), the expectations of parents (2/48) and the unwillingness of pupils (2/48). However, as demonstrated with examples 13, 14 and 15 below, teachers mentioned that offering more power to the pupils would be a goal worth reaching for, but the practical realisations for it are found difficult.

(13) female, 42 years, elementary school

"..tietenkin tähän pitää pyrkiä vähitellen, mutta ikäkauden sallimissa rajoissa"
"..naturally this is something that should be reached for little by little, but within the limitations caused by the age levels of pupils "

(14) female, 41 years, lower secondary school

"Olisi hienoa antaa vapautta enemmän, mutta silloin kaikkien oppilaiden tulisi olla yhtä sitoutuneita ja vapaamatkustajat poistaa."
"It would be great to offer more freedom, but that would mean that all pupils are as committed and free loaders should be removed."

(15) female 44, elementary school

"Onhan se periaatteessa kunnioitettavaa, mutta mitenkä esim. alakoulun englannin opiskelussa se olisi käytännössä mahdollista"
"In principle it is respectable, but how could this be done in practice for instance at elementary English lessons"

In addition, the teacher trainees were asked whether they considered pupils have enough power over their studies. As seen in table 13, in contrast to the teachers, a slight majority of the participants felt that pupils do not have enough power over their own learning, as 62. 3% (N = 33) of the teacher trainees answered 'no'.

Table 13. Do teacher trainees feel pupils have enough power over their studies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	20	37,7	37,7	37,7
	No	33	62,3	62,3	100,0
	Total	53	100,0	100,0	

Next I am going to look at the claims made to each participant group. The teachers were asked to answer claims about teaching, the teacher trainees were asked to answer claims about their own studying habits as well as teaching and pupils were asked to answer to claims about their own learning habits. Each participant group is presented under their own sub heading.

4.4.1 Claims for the teachers

Questions 17 and 18 (appendix 1) consisted of altogether 10 claims that the teachers could then choose to answer 'agree', 'disagree' or 'I do not know'. These claims could be divided into 'pro-autonomous' claims and 'non-pro autonomous' claims. An example of the pro-autonomous claim is for instance the statement '*I encourage pupils to bring their own materials and ideas to the classroom*' and an example of a non-autonomous claim is '*I don't consider offering choices for pupils necessary*'. As an overall result teachers seemed to have

attitudes that are more open to autonomous behaviour as 8 out of 10 claims were answered in a 'pro-autonomous' manner.

I will first present the answers which indicated more pro-autonomous attitudes among the teachers. All the participants agreed with the statement '*I try to create lessons that activate the pupils*' (100%, N = 89). The claim '*the goal is to educate lifelong learners*' was agreed with by 96. 6% (N = 86) of the participants. Moreover, the claim '*I do not see offering choices for pupils necessary*' was disagreed with by 78. 7% (N = 70) of the participants. The claim '*it is important to set the goals for learning together with the pupil*' was agreed with by 65. 2% (N = 58) of the participants. With the assertion '*if pupils do self-chosen tasks, it is difficult to follow their progress*' 61. 8% (N = 55) of the participants disagreed with. The claim '*pupils will not work efficiently if they get to choose for themselves*' was disagreed with by 64% (N = 57) of the participants. The claim '*I encourage pupils to bring into class their own materials/ideas*' was agreed with by 53. 9% (N = 48) of the teachers. In addition, as shown in table 14 below, the claim '*sharing authority with pupils will lead to chaos/loss of respect*', was still disagreed with by the majority of the teachers, but it also received a high number of 'I don't know' answers.

Table 14. Teacher's answers to the claim 'giving power over decisions to pupils will lead to chaos / loss of respect'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Agree**	*13*	*14,6*	*14,6*	*14,6*
	Disagree	*44*	*49,4*	*49,4*	*64,0*
	I don't know	*32*	*36,0*	*36,0*	*100,0*
	Total	*89*	*100,0*	*100,0*	

In contrast, two non-autonomous claims were agreed with and they were: '*there is not enough time/resources for creating individualized teaching*' (agreed with by 87.

6% (N =78)) and '*it is up to the teacher to make the decisions in the classroom*' (agreed with by 70. 8% (N = 63).

4.4.2 Claims for the teacher trainees

Teacher trainees had two sets of claims to answer, 15 that were about their own studying skills and 10 that were about teaching. As an overall result the teacher trainees reported using more pro autonomous learning methods, as 11 out of 15 claims were agreed with. With the claims about teaching, the same overall result was gained as from the teachers, as 8 out of 10 claims were agreed with. However, the results did vary between individual claims as showed next.

The fifteen claims asked from the teacher trainees about their own studying skills were divided under three questions, questions 6, 7 and 8 (see appendix 2). All the five claims grouped under question number 6 were agreed with by the majority of the participants. The first claim '*I compare the grammar rules of the languages I know*' was agreed with by 77. 4% (N = 41), as shown in table 15 below.

Table 15. Teacher trainees' answers to the claim 'I follow and evaluate my progress in language learning'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Agree**	*42*	*79,2*	*79,2*	*79,2*
	Disagree	*11*	*20,8*	*20,8*	*100,0*
	Total	*53*	*100,0*	*100,0*	

The results gained for the following three claims were highly similar to the results for the first claim. Claim number two, '*I follow and evaluate my progress in language learning*', was agreed with by 79. 2% (N = 42). Claim number three, '*I think about*

strategies that would help me learn languages better', was agreed with by 75. 5% (N = 40) of the participants. Claim number four, '*I recognize problems that prohibit my development*', in turn was agreed with by 71. 7% (N = 38) of the participants. The claim number five, '*I don't like making mistakes while speaking/writing*', was agreed with by 73. 6% (N = 39) of the participants. However, this claim shows more autonomous attitude if it is disagreed with, but was done so only by 20. 8% (N = 11) of the participants, as can be seen in the table 16 below.

Table 16. Teacher trainees' answers to the claim '*I don't like making mistakes while speaking/writing*'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	39	73,6	73,6	73,6
	Disagree	11	20,8	20,8	94,3
	I don't know	3	5,7	5,7	100,0
	Total	53	100,0	100,0	

The claims presented under question 7 gained the following numbers. The claim '*I prefer learning from the teacher than my peers*' was agreed with by the majority of the participants, as 49. 1% (N = 26) of the teacher trainees agreed with it, as shown in table 17 below. It was disagreed with by 24. 5% (N=13) and it also received the highest number of 'I don't know' answers, with 26. 4% (N = 14) of the participants choosing it.

Table 17. Teacher trainees' answers to the claim '*I prefer learning from the teacher than my peers*'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	26	49,1	49,1	49,1
	Disagree	13	24,5	24,5	73,6
	I do not know	14	26,4	26,4	100,0
	Total	53	100,0	100,0	

The second statement, '*I hesitate to take part in fear of making mistakes*', was disagreed with by a slight majority, with 56. 6% (N = 30) of the participants answering that they disagree with the statement. The following claim, '*I think working in groups is a waste of time*', was also disagreed with, but more clearly, as 86. 8% (N = 46) of the participants disagreed with it. However, the statement '*I don't like suggesting the teachers what to do in courses*' was agreed with by the majority of the participants, as shown in table 18.

Table 18. Teacher trainees' answers to the claim 'I don't like suggesting the teachers what to do in courses'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agreed	26	49,1	49,1	49,1
	Disagreed	18	34,0	34,0	83,0
	I do not know	9	17,0	17,0	100,0
	Total	53	100,0	100,0	

The last claim under question number 7, '*I gather language learning material on my own initiative (from the internet/magazines etc)*', was agreed with by 75. 5% (N = 40) of the participants.

The last five statements about the teacher trainees' own language learning were grouped under question number 8 (appendix 2). The claims received following answers. The first statement, '*As I read I try to guess the meaning of new words*' was agreed with by 96. 2% (N = 51) of the participants. The second claim, '*I like to figure out grammar rules by myself*', got fairly evenly divided answers. As shown in table 19, 47. 2% (N = 25) of the participants agreed with the statement, 39. 6% (N = 21) disagreed with it and 13. 2% (N = 7) of the participants answered they do not know.

Table 19. Teacher trainees answers to 'I like to figure out grammar rules by myself'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	25	47,2	47,2	47,2
	Disagree	21	39,6	39,6	86,8
	I don't know	7	13,2	13,2	100,0
	Total	53	100,0	100,0	

The third statement in this group, '*I don't believe I can evaluate my own learning*', was disagreed with by 83. 0% (N = 44) of the participants. The fourth statement, '*I prefer working with topics I have chosen myself*' was agreed with by a clear majority of the participants, 92. 5% (N = 49). The final statement relating teacher trainees own language learning was '*I learn the best when teacher explains the grammar rules*' which was agreed with by 60. 4% (N = 32) of the teacher trainees and disagreed with by 22. 6% (N = 12) of the participants.

As a summary, based on the whole set of claims under the questions 6, 7 and 8, the majority of the teacher trainees seem to possess some autonomous language learning skills, which is not that surprising as they are most likely good language learners who use a variety of methods in language learning. However, based on this study it is impossible to say, whether the teacher trainees themselves would consider themselves as autonomous language learners. Most

likely not as the majority of them were not familiar with the term autonomous language learning.

In addition, teacher trainees were asked to answer 10 statements on their own beliefs about teaching (questions 11 and 12, appendix 2) which were the same claims that were presented to the teachers as well. For the first five claims the teacher trainees answered pro-autonomously for all the claims except the statement number two. The first claim, '*The goal is to train life-long learners*' was agreed with by 94. 3% (N = 50) of the teacher trainees. Statement number two, '*There isn't enough resources/time to create individualized teaching*', was agreed with by 52. 8% (N = 28) and disagreed with by 32. 1% (N = 17). These results are also presented in table 20 below.

Table 20. Teacher trainees' answers to the claim 'There isn't enough resources/time to create individualized teaching'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	28	52,8	52,8	52,8
	Disagree	17	32,1	32,1	84,9
	I do not know	8	15,1	15,1	100,0
	Total	53	100,0	100,0	

The following statement, '*Giving power over decisions to pupils will lead to chaos/loss of respect*', was disagreed with by the majority of the participants, with 73. 6% (N = 39) of the participants. The claim '*I do not consider offering choices for pupils necessary*' was not agreed with by anyone of the teacher trainees, with 94. 3% (N = 50) of the participants disagreeing with it. Similar to the results of the teachers, all the teacher trainees agreed with the statement '*I try to plan lesson that activate the pupils*'.

The first claim of the question 12, '*It is important to set the goals for learning together with the pupil'*, was agreed with by 92. 5% (N = 49) of the teacher trainees. The second claim in this group, '*It is the teachers job to make decisions in the classroom*', gained quite varied results, as it was agreed with by 39. 6% (N = 21) of the participants, disagreed with by 34. 0% (N = 18) and 26. 4% (N = 14) of the participants answered they do not know. The third statement, '*If pupils do self-chosen tasks, it is difficult to follow/evaluate their progress*', was disagreed with by 67. 9% (N = 36) of the participants. The fourth claim in this question group, '*Pupils will not work efficiently if they get to choose for themselves*', was disagreed with by 75. 5% (N = 40) of the participants. The final statement '*I encourage pupils to bring into class their own materials/ideas*' was agreed with by 77. 4% (N = 41) of the teacher trainees.

As a summary teacher trainees had more pro autonomous beliefs about teaching. In comparison to the same claims given to the teachers, the teacher trainees agreed with them stronger. However, the overall result between teachers and teacher trainees were surprisingly similar and clearly presented common beliefs.

4.4.3 Claims for the pupils

The claims for pupils focused on learning styles and habits in order to see how autonomous pupils currently are in their language learning. There were altogether seven questions (questions 8 to 14, see appendix 3) that consisted of altogether 34 statements. These statements presented following groups: learning methods, English lessons and statements about the beliefs on learning and teaching.

All in all 15 claims could be classified under learning methods. Only five out of these 15 were agreed with by the majority of the pupils, resulting in that the pupils do not seem to be familiar with many learning methods and seemed to be quite non consistent when it came to using them. This was indicated by the large amount of variation found within the answers. In addition, many pupils chose to answer 'I do not know', indicating that this topic is not familiar to them, and the possible use of different learning methods is not consciously thought about. I am first going to present the five methods the majority of the pupils agreed with. After this I am going to present the learning methods which, based on the results, were not used by pupils or got mixed answers.

Only five of the claims were agreed with by the majority of the participants. First of all, the statement '*I use what I have learnt previously to learn something new*' was agreed with by 83. 1 % (N = 49) of the participants. Secondly, the statement '*As I read I try to guess the meaning of new words*', was agreed with by 72. 9% (N = 43) of the participants. The following three statements, '*I compare grammar rules among the languages I know*', '*As I read I focus on pictures, subtitles and keywords*', '*I use the library/internet/other sources in order to learn English*' were all agreed with by 50. 8% (N = 30) of the participants.

All the rest ten claims about learning styles were not clearly agreed with by the participants. This can also be seen with the participants answer to the claim '*I think about strategies that help me learn better*', as shown in table 21, which was disagreed with by 50. 8% (N = 30) of the participants and only agreed with by 20.3 % (N=12) of the pupils.

Table 21. Pupils answers to the question 'I think about strategies that help me learn better'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	12	20,3	20,3	20,3
	Disagree	30	50,8	50,8	71,2
	I don't know	17	28,8	28,8	100,0
	Total	59	100,0	100,0	

Moreover, the claim '*I set learning goals for myself*' was only agreed with by 47. 5% (N = 28) of the participants. The statement '*I connect new information to pictures and ideas*' was agreed with by 39. 0% (N = 23) of the participants and 37. 3% (N = 22) of them chose to answer 'I don't know'. Statements were also clearly disagreed with, such as the claim '*As I read/write I think about grammar rules*' (disagreed with by 42. 4% (N =25)), the statement '*I use a dictionary while reading*' (disagreed with by 44. 1% (N = 26)), the claim '*I like to figure out grammar rules by myself*' (disagreed with by 45. 8% (N = 27)) and the statement '*I look for people to talk to in order to improve my oral skills*', which was disagreed with by 42. 4% (N = 25) of the participants. The last three claims received highly divided results, with all the three answer options almost equally presented. The claim '*I learn better when I work alone*' received a high number of 'I don't know' answers (40. 7% (N = 24)) and 30. 5% (N = 18) of the participants agreed with this statement and 28. 8% (N = 17) of them disagreed with it. The statement '*I recognize the problems that slow my development*' got divided answers as well, with 39% (N = 23) of the participants agreeing with it, 35. 6% (N = 21) of them couldn't say and 25. 4% (N = 15) of them disagreed with the statement. The last claim to be related to learning strategies was '*I follow and evaluate my progress in language learning*' and this was agreed with by 35. 6% (N = 21) of the participants, disagreed with by 30. 5% (N = 18) and 33. 9% (N = 20) could not tell whether they do this or not. In addition, pupils did feel they are able to

evaluate their own learning, as 57. 6% (N = 34) of the participants disagreed with the statement '*I don't think I can evaluate my own learning*'. However, the belief that making mistakes is bad seemed to be relatively strong among the pupils, as the statement '*I don't like making mistakes while speaking/writing*' was agreed with by 72, 9% (N = 43).

Based on these results there seems to be roughly one third of the pupils who use different learning strategies, but it is quite clear that using learning strategies is not done by all of the learners and that for the majority of the pupils thinking about different learning strategies is not something they are familiar with. For the classrooms to be more autonomous it would require the learners to be more conscious about their own learning.

The next claims focused on the classroom practices. These statements focused more on the situations found inside the classroom, trying to see what kind of attitudes pupils have when it comes to different working methods in classrooms. The results show that pupils like working in groups as well as with topics they have chosen themselves. In comparison, when asked to answer claims about the behaviour of the teacher or goals of the lessons, many of the participants were not able to give straight answers but many chose the 'I do not know' option.

First of all pupils were asked how they feel about different working habits. Pupils were positive about working in groups and with topics they have chosen themselves. The first claim, '*I like to work with a partner*' was agreed with by 78% (N = 46) of the participants and this was supported by the results from the statements '*I believe working in a group is a waste of time*' (disagreed with by 76. 3% (N = 45)), '*I get frustrated if I work with my classmates*' (disagreed with by 72. 9%) and '*I actively take part in group works*' (agreed with by 66. 1%). When asked to answer the claim '*I take actively part in the whole class discussions*' the figures became more divided, with 37. 3% (N = 22) of the participants saying they

disagree with this statement, 33. 9% (N = 20) of them answered they do not know and only 28. 8% (N = 17) of the pupils agreed with it. In comparison to this, the statement '*I hesitate to take part in the fear of making mistakes*' was disagreed with by 49, 2% (N = 29) of the participants, agreed with by 30, 5% (N = 18) and 20, 3% (N = 12) answered 'I don't know'. Pupils also reported they like to work with topics they have chosen themselves, as 74. 6% (N = 44) of the participants agreed with this statement. Similar results were gained when asked to answer the claim '*I want to make decisions relating my English studies (for example methods, tasks or topics)*' the majority (54. 2% (N = 32)) of the participants agreed with it. In comparison, the statement '*I want the teacher to make the decisions relating what is done during the lessons*' divided the group a bit more, as 39. 0% (N = 23) opted the 'I don't know' answer, 33. 9% (N = 20) of the pupils disagreed with it and only 27. 1% (N = 16) of the participants agreed with it.

Secondly, the two claims relating teacher behaviour in class received a high number of 'I don't know' answers. The first claim, '*The teacher listens and takes note of my suggestions during the lessons*' was agreed with by 45, 8% (N = 27) of the learners, but almost the same amount of participants (47. 5% (N = 28)) answered that they did not know whether this happens or not. The second claim, '*The teacher encourages to modify the tasks to be more suitable for me*', was agreed with by 37. 3% (N = 22) but again the majority, 44. 1% (N = 26) of the participants, did not know if they agreed with or disagreed with this statement. Pupils seemed to mostly be orientated towards teacher centred teaching methods. The statement '*I learn better when the teacher explains the grammar rules*' was agreed with by 49. 2% (N = 29) of the participants. However, slightly different result was gained for the claim '*I rather learn from the teacher than my peers*' as the majority, 44. 1% (N =26), of the participants answered 'I don't know' and only 35. 6% (N = 21) agreed with it. The statement '*I don't like telling the teacher what we could do during the lessons*' got evenly divided answers, with 42. 4% (N = 25) of the pupils answering 'I don't know', 30. 5% (N = 18) of the

participants agreeing with it and 27. 1% (N = 16) of the pupils disagreed with the claim.

Thirdly, pupils were asked about the means of learning as well as being aware of the goals of the lessons. The textbook seemed to be the main studying tool, as 44. 1% (N = 26) of the participants agreed with the statement '*the textbook is my main tool for studying*', whereas only 28. 8% (N= 17) of the participants disagreed with this claim. The goals of the English lessons were partly known and partly caused division in the answers, as for the claim '*I usually do not know the learning goals of the English lesson*' the majority of the participants, 37. 3% (N =22), answered 'I do not know'. The same claim was agreed with by 27. 1% (N = 16) of the participants and disagreed with by 35. 6% (N = 21) of the pupils. When asked if '*It is good that all the pupils do the same activities*' the majority disagreed with it (40. 7% (N = 24) of the participants). Relatively high number, 33, 9% (N = 20), chose to answer 'I don't know'.

As a summary, it can be stated that the learners do are not consistently aware or using different learning strategies. In addition, they results consisted from a lot of 'I don't know' answers, indicating either fatigue among the learners towards the questionnaire or that the participants have no experience of the topics of the claims presented.

4.5 **Open comments**

Teachers and teacher trainees were also offered the option to leave an open comment at the end of the questionnaire. It was answered by 8 teacher trainees and 17 teachers. Some of the comments by the teachers are presented here, as they offered interesting opinions and added extra information about the results found. These open comments emphasised the point that participants felt quite

strongly that it is the teachers' responsibility to be in charge and that the current situation does not offer enough resources for autonomous language learning.

The views that were visible in the results were reinforced in the open comments. For example, 13/17 teachers mentioned that an autonomous learner is a good educational goal in principal, but also mentioned that this goal cannot be achieved because of different restrictions. Restrictions mentioned by the teachers were the lack of tools/methods for fostering autonomy, number of pupils, the age of pupils, level of pupils, time limitations, material limitations and goals set by the curriculum. Interestingly, the restriction mentioned most often was pupils, in one form or another, as 9/17 of teachers included this in their answers, as seen for instance with examples number 16 and 17 below.

> (16) Male, 54 years, lower secondary school
>
> "On oppilaita, joiden motivaatiotaso sekä oppimiskyvyt mahdollistaisivat monenlaisia opetustapoja. Todellisuudessa toimitaan totaalisen heterogeenisissä ryhmissä. Niissä pitää toimia kaikkien edun nimessä tiukan opettajajohtoisesti. Taivaan valtakunnassa (homogeenissiä ryhmissä) tilanne voisi olla toinen."
> "There are pupils, who are motivated and capable of learning through a variety of teaching styles. In reality we are working with completely heterogeneous groups. In these it is in everybody's best interest to work with a strictly teacher oriented style. In a utopian dream (in homogeneous groups) the situation might be different."

> (17) Female, 38 years, elementary school
>
> "Resurssipula esteenä!!! Alakoulun oppilaat eivät ota vastuuta, jos oppimista ei kontrolloida ja jos oppilailla on omat ja erilaiset tehtävät, on tarkastaminen mahdotonta isoissa luokissa. Meidän koulussa on jopa 30 oppilaan luokkia."
> "The lack of resources is the obstacle!!! Elementary pupils will not take responsibility if studying is not controlled and if the pupils have their own and individual tasks, checking these is impossible with big classes. In our school we have classes that have up to 30 pupils."

Other restrictions teachers mentioned were for instance the lack of tools, time and the feared added workload this type of teaching might cause as shown with examples number 18 and 19. In addition, the curriculum especially in the upper secondary school was mentioned.

(18). Female, 56 years, upper secondary school

"Lukion kurssit runnotaan läpi aikamoisessa paineessa, joten usein tuntuu helpommalta vain antaa ohjeet kuin keskustella esim sopivista tehtävistä"
"The courses in upper secondary school are rushed through with quite a lot of pressure, so it often feels easier just to give instructions rather than discuss for instance about suitable tasks"

However, positive attitudes towards promoting autonomy in language learning were portrayed as well, most clearly in 4 out of the 17 answers. For these teachers, autonomy did not only seem to be a worthy goal, but also as something concrete and necessary, especially for the purpose of being able to provide for different learner types, as seen for instance with example 19 below.

(19) Female, 56 years, lower secondary school
"opetuksen yksilöllistäminen tulee olemaan välttämätöntä myös erilaistuvan oppilasaineksen vuoksi ja olen sitä mieltä että siihen tulisi panostaa – ei niin että oppikirjasarjat tarjoavat "eriyttävää" materiaalia vaan työtapoja muuttamalla"
"Creating more individualized teaching will be necessary also because of more variety found in pupils and I think it is something that should be emphasized – not by offering differencing material in textbooks but by changing the way we work"

One of the possible reasons why teachers feel that giving power to the learners does not work is that they have negative experiences about it, for instance that the learners refuse to take on the responsibility or do not share the work equally. An example of this is shown here with example 20 below, as this teacher trainee mentions and discusses some of the difficulties she has faced while trying to share power with learners. She mentions how there is not

enough time or motivation from the learners part for sharing power. It would indicate that the teacher trainees are not trained for this during their training.

(20) Female, 25 years

"Oppilaille päätäntävallan antamisesta kommentoisin sen verran, että joskus se tuntuu vaikealta erityisesti yläkoululaisten kanssa ihan sen takia, etteivät oppilaat itse halua/pysty ottamaan päätäntävaltaa vastaan. Usein tuntuu käyvän niin, että jos kysyn oppilaiden toiveita/mielipiteitä, vastauksia ei tule tai ne ovat hyvin epämääräisiä (esim. "olisi kivaa, jos tunnit olisivat rennompia"). Johtuuko tämä siitä, etteivät oppilaat ole tottuneet muiden opettajien kanssa ottamaan vastuuta ja sanomaan mielipidettään vai siitä, ettei ryhmän paineen takia uskalleta sitä sanoa, sitä en tiedä. Olen kyllä yrittänyt erilaisia palautteenantotapoja, esim. nimetön palaute lapuilla toimi paremmin kuin avoin keskustelu. Aina vain ei olisi aikaa palautteen/mielipiteiden keräämiselle, kokoamiselle ja sen perusteella päätösten tekemiselle.."

"About giving power to pupils, I would just like to say that sometimes it feels hard especially with secondary school students because the pupils themselves do not want to/cannot take responsibility. It feels that often if I ask pupils hopes/opinions, I get no reply or the answers are really vague (for example "it would be nice if the lessons would be more relaxed"). Is this because pupils are not used to it with other teachers to take responsibility and say what they really feel, or because of group pressure they are afraid to do so. I have tried different feedback options, for example anonymous feedback through paper works better than a discussion. However, there is not always enough time to collect feedback/opinions and group them and then make decisions based on these.."

Overall, especially when compared with the results gained from the questions about classroom behaviour, participants share the ideas and values behind autonomous language learning but do not see it possible in the school context.

5 Discussion

This study set out to answer three research questions: how familiar are the participants with the concept of learner autonomy, if the seeds of autonomy are found among the participants and how willing and prepared are the participants for promoting learner autonomy. The discussion part of this thesis is presented under each of these research questions.

5.1 Participants' familiarity with the term autonomy in language learning

Even though there is increased interest in the field of language learning and teaching towards autonomous language learning (Benson 2011), it is still a minority phenomenon in Finland. It was evident from this study that neither the teachers nor the teacher trainees were familiar with the term autonomy in language learning. Only 28.1% (N = 25) of the teachers and 20.8% (N = 11) of the teacher trainees were familiar with the term. Moreover, when asked to describe what they understand with the term, only less than half of the teachers who said they were familiar with the term gave a definition that was similar to the ones present in the literature (25/89 familiar with the term, 10/44 proficient definitions of the term). Among teacher trainees similar results were found as 11/53 of the participants reported they were familiar with the term but only 5/32 of the definitions given echoed the definitions present in the field today. The majority of the answers gave a rather narrow view, for instance, as shown with example one, many of the participants simply understood autonomous language learning as being equivalent to independent language learning. In

fact, as shown in previous studies, autonomous language learning is highly effective when it happens within a group and in classrooms, as we can see for instance by looking at the work done by Dam (1995, 2011, Dam&Legenhausen 1999). Moreover, it is not independent learning in the sense that it does not require the teacher to leave the learner to their own advices, in fact quite the opposite. Leaving the learner completely to his/her own devices is most likely going to hinder rather than help learning (Benson 2010). The importance of the teachers' role in autonomous language learning is universally agreed with in the field (Little, Benson, Holec and Dam) and it can be argued that without the teachers' active participation in the process autonomous language learning is unlikely to take place.

As the majority of the participants were not familiar with the term they possessed many of the false beliefs stated by Little (1991) about language learning autonomy. It was interesting to find these same beliefs within these results, even though they were stated more than two decades ago. This only underlines the fact that autonomous language learning is not a well-known term in Finland. Some of the false beliefs the participants had, were for instance that autonomous language learning would be a method or an easily described behaviour. Only a minority of the definitions mentioned that autonomous language learning is a process, or that autonomous language learning is reached gradually. In comparison, the majority of the participants defined autonomy as learners simply making decisions about their own learning. However, as argued for instance by Nunan (1995), the majority of the learners do not, at least in the beginning, know what to study and need close guidance in order to make decisions that are beneficial for them. However, most of the participants only mentioned that their learners cannot take responsibility and only a small number of participants saw it as a skill that could be taught. However, for instance Little (1991) has argued that the earlier one starts to coach the learners towards autonomous language learning the less resistance

one is likely to face. The majority of the participants also left out the important notion that autonomy is not a steady state (Little 1991, Benson 2010), but rather varies even within each individual.

The results found here give a back bone for the whole study, as the majority of the participants were not familiar with autonomous language learning and they also did not promote it fully in their classrooms. However, the questionnaire was planned so that the questions could be answered even without any knowledge of autonomous language learning. At least in mainstream education the term is not known enough for it to be actively promoted. Moreover, not fully understanding autonomous language learning or having false beliefs about it, clearly had an effect on the other results gained from this study. For instance beliefs that in an autonomous language classroom a teacher would have no role, or would have to give up all power or initiative, resulted in teachers reporting that autonomous language learning could not work. In the following chapter I am going to discuss in more detail the results concerning the current manifestations of autonomy in EFL-classrooms and in teacher training.

5.2 Autonomy in classrooms and in teacher training

The second research question looked at whether autonomous behaviour would currently be present in EFL-classrooms or in teacher training. Based on this study, the EFL-classrooms in Finland are more teacher orientated and students are not actively involved in making decisions about their learning. Relative freedom was found in teacher training, although it did not offer information about autonomous language learning. In this chapter I am going to discuss these results in more detail.

Little (1991) and Holec (1979) argue that for autonomous language learning to take place, teachers and learners need to acquire new roles. In this study the participants were asked to describe how they see the roles of both teachers and learners in a classroom. The majority of the participants described the roles of the teachers and learners in a traditional, teacher centred manner. This could also lead to the situation mentioned for instance by Little (1991) and Lacey (2007), where the teachers' perception of what a good, active class looks like, prevents her/him from seeing other types of lessons or learning as functional or good. It was especially interesting to see that almost all of the pupils saw the role division in a highly traditional and in a quite narrow manner, where the teachers' job is to teach and learners' job is to learn. This gives reason to believe that pupils are not accustomed to different kind of teacher/learner roles and would most likely resist, at least initially, a transition towards autonomous language learning (Little, Holec, Dam, Lacey). In this light, many of the arguments made by teachers about learners not being able or not wanting to take responsibility are in fact based on a true assessment. The learners have been educated into the current system where they expect the teacher to tell them what to do and by not challenging the current system teachers can feel they are good at what they do.

All the participants were in favour of offering more choice for learners and seeing this as a positive thing. However, the actual realisations of sharing power in classrooms seemed to be relatively small. Being able to make decisions in the classroom is also one of the fundamental features of autonomous language learning and the students and teachers need to feel confident enough to make these decisions (Dam, Little). When asked about offering choices for pupils, the results showed that it is not something that happens often in language learning classrooms, as both groups named the option 'once a week' as the most common answer and the option 'rarely' was the second most common answer. Moreover, these decisions were often about tasks or task

types, or done after the 'official' part of the lessons was done. These sort of options can easily become 'empty choices' if for instance learners quickly realise that the choices made do not actually influence the evaluation. These 'empty choices' will not motivate the learners to work efficiently, and this in turn will give the teacher the impression that if allowed to decide for themselves learners are not capable of taking responsibility for their studies.

The scale created by Kumurdivelu painted a clear picture of the current classroom practices. On all of its four parts the clear majority of the teachers reported that the current classroom practices were more non-autonomous in nature. First of all, even though involving learners in the evaluation process and reflection of learning is one of the crucial points of autonomous language learning (see for instance Dam 2011, Benson2011, Little 2007), teachers were least active in involving pupils in the evaluation process. In addition, the teacher trainees also reported that they were not given information about alternative evaluation methods during their training. Are we then, knowingly or unconsciously, keeping up the existing system where evaluation is always done by teachers? If we believe that learners are not able to evaluate their own learning we cannot fully foster autonomous language learning. In addition, pupils reported that self-evaluation is not an everyday procedure in classrooms, even though 57. 6% of them considered themselves to be able to evaluate their own progress in language learning. Creating autonomous language learning should involve students holistically in the learning process, because it is essentially about finding a balance between rights and responsibilities.

The second important find based on the scale by Kumurdivelu, was that text books were the main source of material for classrooms. These results were the same as found by Aro (2009), who mentioned how in the Finnish EFL-classrooms the text book is usually the main tool for studying. However, as discussed by Aro (2009), using text books can have a limiting effect on the use

of studying materials and resources. Finding English materials in Finland would be easy even for learners. Moreover, for example Dam and Kuchah have involved the students in providing the materials for language learning with inspiring results. In this current study, 91% of the teachers reported that they use commercially produced textbooks. In addition, teachers reported producing materials they think will be interesting for the pupils. Naturally, providing extra materials for the pupils is useful, but as long as the materials are produced by the teacher and not for instance collected by the learners, we cannot talk about autonomous language learning being encouraged. This type of behaviour also implies that the basic assumption the majority of the teachers have, is that it is the teachers' job to provide all the material. An easy access to English speaking materials was indicated through the results, as the majority of the teacher trainees and pupils reported using outside materials, such as the internet for learning or finding materials. Moreover, teachers do encourage pupils to bring these into the classroom, as based on this questionnaire 53. 9% of the teachers agreed with the statement '*I encourage pupils to bring their own materials/ideas in to class*'. However, what is then actually done with these materials, and/or how much they are used, was unfortunately out of reach of this study. In other words, the materials and their use should have importance to the learners. Dam talks about how pupils need to feel confident enough about taking charge of their own learning, and that they need to be aware of the effect their actions will have. The idea behind autonomy is that learners would be actively involved in producing and finding materials used for learning. However, sharing this control with the learners is often difficult for the teachers as they might for instance feel unsure about using other materials (Dam 2011, Lacey 2007). The pupils also gave a highly unified description of an English lesson, indicating that pupils recognise and anticipate certain type of lessons, where the text book has a central role. In comparison, teacher trainees mentioned that during their training they were encouraged to using materials outside of the text books. This could, however, only continue the current

situation where the teachers feel that they alone are responsible for providing materials for the classroom.

Next I am going to discuss the arguments the participants had against autonomous language learning. First of all, it was interesting to see that many of the teachers especially felt the need to explain their actions in a classroom. Arguments teachers and teacher trainees raised against autonomous language learning were for instance resistance among learners, time, curriculum or the different levels of skills pupils have. However, previous studies show that especially weaker learners benefit from autonomous language learning (Dam and Legenhausen 1999, Lacey 2007, Little 1991). In addition, if we look at the free comments gained from the participants, they mentioned for example that there is no time for creating individual materials and exams for all. Naturally this would be impossible but empowering the learners, so that they are able to modify the tasks for their own level is not impossible. For example, only one teacher mentioned that autonomous language learning could actually help with dealing with the diversity in the classrooms. What is behind all these restrictions is essentially pressure to do something else and this pressure might come for instance from peers, parents or from the school policies or from the head teacher. Pressure on the teachers might make them unwilling to try something that is likely to cause initial resistance, especially if they feel the current method is providing them with the wanted results.

Even though critical towards teacher centered teaching styles, based on this study the current teacher training in Jyväskylä is not offering enough information about autonomous language learning. The clear majority of the teacher trainees were not familiar with the term, meaning that during their training they had not heard about it. However, in general the teacher training was considered being a relatively open environment that did not enforce a certain teaching method. In addition, seeing different mentor teachers gave

them a varied view of the field. Most of the teacher trainees felt that they did not gain enough information about how to keep discipline in classrooms, which implies that young teachers see this as an important or possibly demanding part of their future job. The change required in teacher training, discussed for instance by Little (1991), in order for autonomous language learning to become a mainstream reality is not, at least in the context of the University of Jyväskylä, taking place.

5.3 How willing and prepared the participants are for promoting autonomous language learning in the English classrooms?

Beliefs about teaching and learning also have an effect on the implementation of autonomy. It can even be argued that without certain beliefs about the nature of learning and teaching, fostering autonomous language learning is unlikely to happen. For instance, if a teacher believes s/he has to make all the decisions in the classroom or if a learner believes s/he is not capable of planning his/her studies, fostering autonomy does not have a welcoming starting point. As an overall result all the participant groups had more pro-autonomous views about learning and teaching. It is, however, important to note that sharing these beliefs does not automatically mean that the participant will promote autonomous learning habits in his/her classroom, as seen in chapter 5.2. Moreover, this study found out that even if not encouraged, the seeds of autonomy can be found among the participants.

The participants showed clear signs of agreeing with the main arguments and beliefs behind promoting learner autonomy. For instance, in this study both teacher trainees and pupils reported that they do work better with topics they have been able to influence themselves. Moreover, it was clear from these

results that teachers and teacher trainees strongly feel that the goal is to educate lifelong learners. Moreover, a full 100% of both teachers and teacher trainees said that they try to create lessons that activate pupils. However, it is important to note that here the planning is done by the teacher and not by the learners themselves. What was especially interesting about the claims made for all the participants was the relatively high number of 'I do not know' answers, which clearly indicates that the participants are not familiar with these kind of situations in school context. Moreover, even though the teachers agreed that the goal of an autonomous language learner is a good one, they still mentioned that the ultimate power has to stay with the teacher. These results are highly similar to the ones found in Japan by Nakata when he reported that

> …many Japanese EFL high school teachers, while understanding the importance of autonomy, are not as yet fully ready for promoting it in their learners and have not achieved the full characteristics of language teacher autonomy in high degree (Nakata 2011:908)

Even though Little (1991) argues against many of the fears and misconceptions mentioned by teachers it is understandable that teachers do not want to invest time and effort in to something pupils are likely to resist at least in the beginning. Getting them accustomed into a new way of teaching and learning might seem like a good idea but not a practical solution, especially as the current method of working is relatively successful. Moreover, as discussed by Barcelos and Kalaja (2011: 286) even if participants would possess certain beliefs, it does not necessary mean that these beliefs will become classroom practises. Based on these results it would seem that even though the majority of the participants share the beliefs that autonomous language learning would be beneficial, they lack the knowledge and personal experience, and in addition feel the pressure of external factors, such as the curriculum, prohibiting the change towards an autonomous language learning.

Both Benson (2011) and Little (1995) argue that the 'seeds of autonomy' can be found among learners and that autonomy is a natural part of human behaviour and therefore not something alien to the classrooms. This was one of the interests of the current study as well, as it tried to find out whether the participants would possess some autonomous learning habits and whether there would be opportunities for them to use these at school. Based on this study pupils and teacher trainees both possessed some autonomous language learning habits, though not enough to show full time autonomous language learning. However, the key difference here to truly promoting autonomy, is that these learning styles are not consciously and actively practised. As argued for instance by Dam (1994, 2000, 2011), Little (2007, 2009) and Holec (1979) making the learning as conscious as possible is one of the key elements of autonomous learning. Based on the results, it was evident that more teacher trainees possessed autonomous learning habits than the pupils. This could be because of variety of reasons, for instance age and experience may play an important part but it is also possible that since it is likely that the current English teacher trainees have been good language learners they are more used to using many learning strategies. This would echo again the fact that these 'seeds of autonomy' are in fact present in the classrooms, but unfortunately only something that the 'good learners' have and not everyone in the classroom.

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find out how widely known the term autonomous language learning is in Finland, if autonomous language learning is currently a feature of the EFL classrooms in Finland and what kind of attitudes the participants had towards autonomous language learning. The results showed that autonomy in language learning was not widely known among the participants. Additionally, even though the participants mostly agreed with the ideology behind autonomous language learning and already possessed skills that could be used in fostering autonomous language learning, it was not a feature of the EFL classrooms. The results were logical, since if the participants are not familiar with autonomous language learning, it is not likely that they would be able to foster it fully, even if agreeing with its principles.

The wider philosophy behind this study, as well as behind autonomous language learning, can be summarised into the question: what do we want to achieve with language education? Is the purpose of English lessons to keep the youth under control, as mentioned by some of the teachers in this study, or to genuinely give the learners the opportunity to become independent users of language? Furthermore, is school a place where the learner is perceived as a holistic individual, who can be proactive about his/her own learning, or a subject whose job is to behave and to do as s/he is told? Recently there has been a lot of discussion in the media about the use of power in schools, and what boundaries teachers and learners have (HS 13.5.2013 *Korhonen ei jatka enää opettajana*). This current discussion will most likely shape the future practises of schools, and I would hope that more information would be available about sharing power with learners rather than restricting it. Teaching in Finland is undoubtedly on a high level and many language learners have inspiring

teachers. However, if teachers feel they cannot truly fulfil the goal to educate lifelong learners, or cater for the individualised needs of the learners, something should be done in order to keep the language education evolving and developing.

Currently teachers do not have the information, tools or examples on how to benefit from autonomous language learning. In addition, it was interesting to see that teachers and teacher trainees did not associate autonomous language learning with ELP-program (Kielisalkku 2013), which could be used as a starting point for autonomous language learning. Moreover, the teacher trainees do not gain this information during their training. Therefore the results found in this study leave us with clear implications. More information is needed among teachers and teacher trainees, so that if they so choose, they could help learners in becoming more autonomous language learners. Practical examples and knowledge could help the transition of autonomous language learning into mainstream education, rather than it only remaining as a tool at University level. More information and successful examples would give confidence for the teachers and teacher trainees to try it. In addition, information given to the learners would most likely make them more open to trying autonomous language learning. This would help to educate lifelong, responsible learners, which already is a goal for teachers, but currently not realised in the EFL classrooms.

This study was a preliminary look at the situation of autonomous language learning in Finland and leaves a lot of room for future research. First of all, a comparative study between different universities' teacher training programs would give a more reliable picture on how familiar teacher trainees are with autonomous language learning. Secondly, it would be interesting to see results on implementing autonomous language learning in the EFL-classrooms in Finland. Thirdly, a more qualitative study, executed for instance through

interviews, could offer more insights into the teachers' opinions about fostering autonomy in language classrooms. In addition, there has recently been a lot of discussion in Finland about violence in schools and the power teachers have in those situations. In this current atmosphere giving more power to students might seem to be an unrealistic goal for the teachers, when there is a lot of discussion suggesting we should do just the opposite. Therefore it would be interesting to see how this discussion affects the teachers' opinions. Even though the results gained from the three participant groups all complimented each other, larger respondent groups would naturally increase the reliability of the results.

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Appendices

Appendix 1, the questionnaire for teachers

Question 1, gender
Sukupuoli
☐Nainen
☐Mies

Question 2, age
vastaajan ikä?
(0 - 100)

Question 3, How many years have you worked as a teacher?
Kuinka monta vuotta olette toimineet opettajana?
(0 - 60)

Question 4, The current school level you are working at

Opetan tällä hetkellä suurimaksi osaksi:
☐lukiossa
☐yläkoulussa
☐alakoulussa

Question 5 describe with few words the main tasks of a teacher in a classroom
Kuvaile muutamalla sanalla opettajan pääasiallisia tehtäviä luokassa

_____
_____
_____

Question 6 describe with few words the main tasks of a pupil in a classroom
Kuvaile muutamalla sanalla oppilaan pääasiallisia tehtäviä luokassa

_____
_____
_____

Question 7 materials: read the claims and choose the one which mostly

matches your situation

Materiaalit: Lue kaikki väitteet ja valitse tilannettasi eniten vastaava vaihtoehto

☐ Käytän kaupallisesti valmistettuja oppikirjoja jotka olen valinnut itse tai jotka on valittu koulun kautta

☐ Määrättyjen oppikirjojen lisäksi valmistan lisämateriaaleja joiden uskon kiinnostavan oppilaitani

☐ Osallistan oppilaat oppikirjojen lopulliseen valintaan pyytämällä heitä valitsemaan mielestäni heidän tasolleen sopivista kirjoista

☐ Aloitan määrätyillä oppikirjoilla ja materiaaleilla ja sitten kannustan oppilaitani muokkaamaan tehtäviä heille itselleen kiinnostaviksi ja sopiviksi

☐ Kannustan oppilaitani lukemaan sanomalehtiä, käyttämään nettiä ja muita lähteitä löytääkseen materiaalia jonka he kokevat olevan kiinnostavaa ja heille sopivaa

Question 8 goals: read the claims and choose the one which mostly matches your situation

Tavoitteet: Lue kaikki väitteet ja valitse tilannettasi eniten vastaava vaihtoehto

☐ Seuraan kaikkien opettamieni luokkien kanssa tiettyjä itse asettamiani (tai minulle annettuja) oppimistavoitteita

☐ Keskustelen tavoitteista oppilaiden kanssa ja muokkaan niitä sopiviksi heidän palautteensa pohjalta

☐ Annan oppilaiden valita tietyistä ohjeistetuista tavoitteista

☐ Kysyn oppilailtani mitä he odottavat tunneillani oppivan ja yritän yhdistää heidän oppimistavoitteensa opetussuunnitelmaani

☐ Arvostan oppilaideni tarpeita ja haluja, heidän tavoitteittaan ja päämääriään jotka tunnistan luokkakohtaisesti suunniteltujen kyselyiden avulla

Question 9 action: read the claims and choose the one which mostly matches your situation

Toiminta: Lue kaikki väitteet ja valitse eniten toimintaasi vastaava vaihtoehto

☐ Saavutan opetustavoitteeni esittämällä kielikohdat selkeästi ja tarjoamalla oppilaille paljon mahdollisuuksia harjoitteluun

☐ Päätän tehtävätyypin (yksilötehtävä, parityö, ryhmätyö, koko luokka) joka sopii parhaiten opetustavoitteisiini

☐ Kannustan oppilaitani mukauttamaan sisältöä, tavoitteita ja työskentelytapoja minulle sopivien rajoitteiden sisällä

☐ Annan oppilaideni työskennellä itsenäisesti ja tarvittaessa autan heitä pääsemään takaisin oikeille jäljille

☐ Kehotan oppilaitani luomaan tehdäviä itse ja suoritumaan niistä

omassa tahdissaan omalla tavallaan saavuttaen yhdessä päätetyt tavoitteet

Question 10 evaluation: read the claims and choose the one which mostly matches your situation

Arviointi: Lue kaikki väitteet ja valitse eniten tilannettasi vastaava vaihtoehto
☐ Arvioin oppimistuloksia käyttäen yleisiä kokeita, eli oppikirjojen kokeita tai koulun yhteisiä kokeita
☐ Arvioin oppilaiden suoriutumista käyttäen yleisiä kokeita sekä itse tietylle luokalle suunnittelemiani kokeita
☐ Annan oppilailleni erilaisia koemuotoja (essee, monivalinta yms.) joista valita ja yritän kunnioittaa heidän valintojaan niin usein kuin mahdollista
☐ Pyydän oppilaitani arvioimaan omaa suoriutumistaan käyttäen selkeitä ja tiettyjä määrittämiäni ohjeita. Yleensä otan heidän oman arviointinsa huomioon omaani tehdessäni
☐ Pyydän oppilaita arvioimaan omaa suoriutumistaan käyttäen omia, selkeästi määrittelemiään, ohjenuoria. Annan heidän itsearviointinsa vaikuttaa omaan arviointiini.

Question 11 on average, how often do you offer options for pupils to reach the goals of the lesson?

Keskimäärin kuinka usein annatte oppilaille vaihtoehtoja tunnin tavoitteiden saavuttamiseen
☐ Joka tunti
☐ Kerran viikossa
☐ Kerran kahdessa viikossa
☐ Kerran kuussa
☐ Harvemmin
☐ En koskaan

Question 12 on what topics do you normally give choise for pupils?
Missä asioissa yleensä annatte oppilaille mahdollisuuksia päättää itse / vaihtoehtoja?

_____
_____
_____

Question 13 are you familiar with the term ′autonomy in language learning′?

Onko 'autonomy in language learning' teille käsitteenä tuttu?
☐ Kyllä
☐ Ei

Question 14 please describe shortly what you understand with the term
Kertokaa lyhyesti mitä termi teille tarkoittaa

_____
_____
_____

Question 15 on your opinion, do you think pupils have enough power over their studies?
Onko oppilailla mielestäsi tarpeeksi päätäntävaltaa liittyen opiskeluunsa?
☐ Kyllä
☐ Ei

Question 16 open comments
Vapaat kommentit

_____
_____
_____

Question 17 answer the following claims with options 'agree', 'disagree' or 'cannot say'
Vastaa väittämiin

	Samaa mieltä	Eri mieltä	En tiedä
Tavoitteena on kouluttaa elinikäisiä oppijoita	☐	☐	☐
Opetuksen yksilöllistämiseen ei ole tarpeeksi resursseja / aikaa	☐	☐	☐

Päätäntävallan antaminen oppilaille johtaa kaaokseen / kunnioituksen menettämiseen	☐	☐	☐
En koe vaihtoehtojen tarjoamista oppilaille (esimerkiksi tehtävien suhteen) tarpeellisena	☐	☐	☐
Yritän suunnitella oppilaita aktivoivia tunteja	☐	☐	☐

Question 18 answer the following claims with options 'agree', 'disagree' or 'cannot say'
Vastaa väittämiin

	Samaa mieltä	Eri mieltä	En tiedä
On tärkeää asettaa oppimisen tavoitteet yhdessä oppilaan kanssa	☐	☐	☐
Opettajan tehtävä on tehdä päätökset luokassa	☐	☐	☐
Mikäli oppilaat tekevät omavalintaisia tehtäviä on kehityksen seuraaminen / arviointi hankalaa	☐	☐	☐
Oppilaat eivät työskentele tehokkaasti mikäli saavat itse valita	☐	☐	☐

Question 19 free comments Vapaat kommentit	Kannustan oppilaita tuomaan omia materiaaleja / ideoita tunnille	☐	☐	☐

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 2, the questionnaire for teacher trainees

question 1 gender

Sukupuolesi?

○   Nainen

○   Mies

question 2 age

Ikäsi?

(0 - 100)

question 3 describe with few words the main tasks of the teacher in classroom

Kuvaile muutamalla sanalla opettajan pääasiallisia tehtäviä luokassa

_____

_____

question 4 describe with few words the main tasks of the pupils in classrooms

Kuvaile muutamalla sanalla oppilaiden pääasiallisia tehtäviä luokassa

_____

_____

question 5 do you consider pupils have enough decision power over their studying in classrooms?

Onko oppilailla mielestäsi luokassa tarpeeksi päätäntävaltaa liittyen heidän opiskeluunsa?

○   kyllä

○   ei

question 6 answer claims relating your own studying

vastaa kysymyksiin liittyen omaan kielten opiskeluusi

	samaa mieltä	eri mieltä	en tiedä
vertaan osaamieni kielten kielioppisääntöjä	⭕	⭕	⭕
seuraan ja arvioin kehitystäni kielen opiskelussa	⭕	⭕	⭕
mietin strategioita joiden avulla oppisin kieltä paremmin	⭕	⭕	⭕
tunnistan ongelmat jotka hidastavat kehitystäni	⭕	⭕	⭕
en tykkää tehdä virheitä puhuessani / kirjoittaessani	⭕	⭕	⭕

question 7 answer claims relating your own studying

Vastaa väittämiin liittyen omaan kielten opiskeluusi

	Samaa mieltä	Eri mieltä	En tiedä
opin mieluummin opettajalta kuin opiskelutovereiltani	⭕	⭕	⭕
epäröin osallistua koska pelkään tekeväni virheitä	⭕	⭕	⭕

pienryhmissä toimiminen on mielestäni ajanhukkaa	○	○	○
en mielelläni ehdota opettajille mitä tehdä kursseilla	○	○	○
haen oma-alotteisesti materiaaleja kielen opiskelua varten (netti, lehdet yms.)	○	○	○

Question 8 answer claims relating your own studying

Vastaa väittämiin liittyen omaan kielten opiskeluusi

	Samaa mieltä	Eri mieltä	En tiedä
lukiessani yritän arvata uusien sanojen merkityksen	○	○	○
selvitän kielioppisääntöjä mielelläni itse	○	○	○
en usko että osaan arvioida omaa oppimistani	○	○	○
työskentelen mielelläni itse valitsemieni aiheiden parissa	○	○	○
opin parhaiten kun opettaja selittää kielioppisäännöt	○	○	○

Question 9 are you familiar with the ʹautonomy in language learningʹ concept

Oletko tutustunut 'Autonomy in Language Learning' käsitteeseen?

◯ Kyllä

◯ Ei

Question 10 describe shortly what does the term mean to you

Kerro lyhyesti mitä termi sinulle tarkoittaa

_____

_____

Question 11 answer the claims relating your own teaching (beliefs)

Vastaa väittämiin liittyen omaan opetukseesi

	Samaa mieltä	**Eri mieltä**	**En tiedä**
Tavoitteena on kouluttaa elinikäisiä oppijoita	◯	◯	◯
Opetuksen yksilöllistämiseen ei ole tarpeeksi resursseja / aikaa	◯	◯	◯
Päätäntävallan antaminen oppilaille johtaa kaaokseen / kunnioituksen menettämiseen	◯	◯	◯
En koe vaihtoehtojen tarjoamista oppilaille (esimerkiksi tehtävien suhteen) tarpeellisena	◯	◯	◯
Yritän suunnittella oppilaita aktivoivia tunteja	◯	◯	◯

Question 12 answer the claims relating your own teaching (beliefs)

Vastaa väittämiin liittyen omaan opetukseesi

	Samaa mieltä	**Eri mieltä**	**En tiedä**
On tärkeää asettaa oppimisen tavoitteet yhdessä oppilaan kanssa	○	○	○
Opettajan tehtävä on tehdä päätökset luokassa	○	○	○
Mikäli oppilaat tekevät omavalintaisia tehtäviä on kehityksen seuraaminen / arviointi hankalaa	○	○	○
Oppilaat eivät työskentele tehokkaasti mikäli saavat itse valita	○	○	○
Kannustan oppilaita tuomaan omia materiaaleja / ideoita tunnille	○	○	○

Question 13 answer claims relating your teacher training

Vastaa väittämiin: Sain opettajankoulutuksessa tarpeeksi tietoa seuraavista asioista

	Samaa mieltä	**Eri mieltä**	**En tiedä**

Toimivan ryhmätyöskentelyn edistäminen	○	○	○
Oppilaiden mukaan ottaminen päätösten tekoon	○	○	○
Kurinpito	○	○	○
Tuntisuunnitelman teko	○	○	○
Opetuksen yksilöllistäminen	○	○	○
Oppimistavoitteiden asettaminen	○	○	○
Oppikirjan ulkopuolisen materiaalin hyödyntäminen	○	○	○
Oppilaiden mielipiteen huomioon ottaminen	○	○	○
Erilaisten arviointitapojen hyödyntäminen	○	○	○

Question 14 did you experience during your teacher training that you were offered a certain teaching style? if yes, what kind of a style?

Koitko opettajankoulutuksen tarjoavan sinulle tietynlaisen opetustyylin? Jos kyllä, minkälaisen?

_____

question 15 free comments

vapaat kommentit

_____

_____

Appendix 3, the questionnaire for pupils

IKÄ
Ikäsi?
(0 - 30)
SUKUPUOLI
Sukupuolesi
  ◯ Nainen
  ◯ Mies

ROOLIT
Kuvaile muutamalla sanalla mikä on mielestäsi oppilaiden pääasiallinen tehtävä englannin kielen tunneilla?

_____
_____
_____

ROOLIT2
Kuvaile muutamalla sanalla minkä koet olevan opettajan tehtäviä englannin kielen tunneilla?

_____
_____
_____

TUNTI
Kuvaile lyhyesti tavallinen englannin kielen oppitunti

_____
_____
_____

VAIHTOEHTO
Kuinka usein saat englannin kielen tunneilla vaihtoehtoja tavoitteiden saavuttamiseen? Esimerkiksi saat itse valita tehtävien / toteutustapojen väliltä
  ◯ Joka tunti
  ◯ Joka viikko
  ◯ Kerran kahdessa viikossa
  ◯ Kerran kuussa
  ◯ Harvemmin
  ◯ En koskaan

REFLEKTOINTI
Kuinka usein itsearvioitte menestystänne englannin kielen opiskelussa
  ◯ joka tunti
  ◯ kerran viikossa
  ◯ kerran kahdessa viikossa
  ◯ kerran kuussa
  ◯ harvemmin
  ◯ ei koskaan

STRATEGIES

vastaa väittämiin liittyen omaan englannin kielen opiskeluusi

	samaa mieltä	eri mieltä	en tiedä
Vertaan kielioppisääntöjä osaamieni kielten välillä	○	○	○
Käytän aiemmin oppimaani oppiakseni jotain uutta	○	○	○
Lukiessani kiinnitän huomiota kuviin, väliotsikoihin ja avainsanoihin	○	○	○
Lukiessani/kirjoittaessani ajattelen kielioppisääntöjä	○	○	○
Yhdistän uutta tietoa kuviin ja ideoihin	○	○	○

strategies2

Vastaa väittämiin liittyen omaan englannikielen opiskeluusi

	Samaa mieltä	Eri mieltä	En tiedä
Seuraan ja arvioin kehitystäni kielen opiskelussa	○	○	○
Käytän sanakirjaa apuna lukiessani	○	○	○
Ajattelen strategioita joiden avulla oppisin paremmin	○	○	○
Tunnistan ongelmat jotka hidastavat kehitystäni	○	○	○
Käytän kirjastoa / nettiä / muita lähteitä oppiakseni	○	○	○

strategies3

Vastaa väittämiin liittyen omaan englannin kielen opiskeluusi

	Samaa mieltä	Eri mieltä	En tiedä
Etsin keskustelukumppaneita parantaakseni suullisia taitojani	○	○	○
En tykkää tehdä virheitä puhuessani / kirjoittaessani	○	○	○
Lukiessani yritän arvata uusien sanojen merkityksen	○	○	○
Selvitän kielioppisääntöjä mielelläni itse	○	○	○
En usko että osaan arvioida omaa oppimistani	○	○	○

STYLES

vastaa väittämiin liittyen omaan englannin kielen opiskeluusi

	Samaa mieltä	Eri mieltä	En tiedä
Työskentelen mielelläni parin kanssa	○	○	○
Otan aktiivisesti osaa koko luokan keskusteluihin	○	○	○
Työskentelen mielelläni omavalintaisten aiheiden parissa	○	○	○
Opin parhaiten kun opettaja selittää kielioppisäännöt	○	○	○

	Samaa Mieltä	Eri mieltä	En tiedä
Opin paremmin kun työskentelen yksin	○	○	○
Opin mieluummin opettajilta kun luokkatovereiltani	○	○	○

STYLES2

Vastaa väittämiin liittyen omaan englannin kielen opiskeluusi

	Samaa Mieltä	Eri mieltä	En tiedä
Epäröin osallistua koska pelkään tekeväni virheitä	○	○	○
Mielestäni pienryhmässä toimiminen on ajanhukkaa	○	○	○
Turhaudun jos työskentelen luokkatovereiden kanssa	○	○	○
Osallistun aktiivisesti pienryhmissä	○	○	○
En mielelläni kerro opettajalle mitä tunnilla voitaisiin tehdä	○	○	○

ASENTEET3

Vastaa väittämiin liittyen englannin kielen opiskeluusi

	Samaa mieltä	Eri mieltä	En tiedä
Haluan tehdä päätöksiä liittyen englannin kielen opiskeluuni (esim. tavat, tehtävät, aiheet)	○	○	○
Haluan että opettaja tekee päätökset liittyen siihen mitä tunnilla tehdään	○	○	○
Kaikkien oppilaiden on hyvä tehdä samat tehtävät	○	○	○
Opettaja kuuntelee ja ottaa huomioon ehdotukseni tunneilla	○	○	○

ASENTEET2

Vastaa väittämiin liittyen omaan englannin kielen opiskeluusi

	Samaa mieltä	Eri mieltä	En tiedä
Opettaja kannustaa muokkaamaan tehtäviä itselle sopiviksi	○	○	○
Asetan itse itselleni oppimistavotteita	○	○	○
En yleensä tiedä englannin tunnin oppimistavoitteita	○	○	○
Oppikirja on pääasiallinen oppimisvälineeni	○	○	○