

Finnish middle school students' experiences on autonomy and the
role of informal learning in EFL lessons and outside school

Linda Knuutila
Master's Thesis
Department of Language and Com-
munication studies
English
University of Jyväskylä
Spring 2022

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta Humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellinen	Laitos Kieli- ja viestintätieteiden laitos
Tekijä Linda Knuutila	
Työn nimi Finnish Middle school students' experiences on autonomy and the role of informal learning in EFL lessons and outside school	
Oppiaine Englanti	Työn laji Maisterintutkielma
Aika Toukokuu 2022	Sivumäärä 63 + 2 liitettä
Tiivistelmä <p>Autonomiaa ja oppimista on tutkittu vuosikymmenien ajan. Autonomian katsotaan edistävän elinikäistä oppimista, parantavan oppimisen laatua ja mahdollistavan oppimista yli luokkahuonerajojen. Autonomiaa on aiemmin määritelty yksilön ominaisuutena ja kapasiteettina ottaa vastuuta omasta oppimisestaan, mutta nykyään autonomian voidaan määrittellä olevan vuorovaikutteista ja dynaamista oppijan ja oppimisympäristön suhteessa toisiinsa. Tässä tutkimuksessa autonomia ymmärretään kokonaisuutena, johon vaikuttavat sekä yksilölliset että vuorovaikutukselliset piirteet. Opettajan roolin tiedetään olevan merkittävä oppilaan autonomian tukemisessa, sillä opettajan omat käsitykset vaikuttavat siihen, miten autonomia ymmärretään ja miten sitä edistetään luokassa. Autonomia ja informaali oppiminen ovat lähekkäisiä aiheita, sillä Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteissa (2014) todetaan, että oppilaat oppivat englantia enenevässä määrin vapaa-ajallaan ja tämä itsenäinen oppiminen tulisi ottaa huomioon opetuksessa. Tässä tutkimuksessa haluttiin selvittää yläkouluikäisten, eli teini-ikäisten, kokemuksia, sillä teini-ikäisistä ei ole tehty paljon tutkimusta kieltenoppijoina. Suomen kontekstissa autonomiaa ei ole juurikaan tutkittu suhteessa englannin oppimisen kokemuksiin.</p> <p>Tässä tutkimuksessa haluttiin selvittää yläkouluikäisten kokemuksia autonomiasta englannin opiskelussa ja millaista tukea he saavat autonomiseen oppimiseensa koulussa ja vapaa-ajalla. Tutkimus toteutettiin kyselytutkimuksena ja siihen vastasi 85 oppilasta kahdesta suomalaisesta koulusta. Kyselyyn vastasi yksi seitsemäs luokka, kaksi kahdeksaslukkaa ja kaksi yhdeksäslukkaa. Kyselyssä oli suljettuja väittämiä ja avoimia kysymyksiä liittyen oppilaiden kokemuksiin autonomiasta ja englannin opiskelusta, englannin tunteihin, opettajan tukeen sekä informaaliin oppimiseen. Kysely toteutettiin tammikuussa ja helmikuussa 2022. Tuloksista selvisi, että oppilaat ovat yleisesti ottaen todella autonomisia englannin oppijoita suhteessa tavoitteellisuuteen, oman oppimisen vaikuttamiseen, metakognitiivisiin kykyihin sekä vapaa-ajan aktiivisuuteen. Pääosin opettajan tuki oli koettu positiiviseksi. Kuitenkin oppilaat kokivat, että opettajan tuki vapaa-ajan oppimiseen oli vähäisempää, kuin kouluun ja opintoihin liittyvään tukeen. Tämän tutkimuksen tuloksia voidaan hyödyntää lisäämällä tietoisuutta informaalista oppimisesta ja sen tukemisesta, sillä tulosten perusteella oppilaat hyödyntävät aktiivisesti vapaa-ajan resursseja kielen oppimiseen. Lisäksi tulokset antavat käytännön tietoa siitä, miten autonomia näkyy teini-ikäisten englannin oppimisen kokemuksissa.</p>	
Asiasanat autonomy, autonomous learning, student experiences, teenage learners, teacher role, informal learning, EFL learning, EFL teaching	
Säilytyspaikka Jyväskylän yliopisto	
Muita tietoja	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	4
2. Key definitions and theoretical framework	6
2.1. Defining autonomy in language learning.....	6
2.2. Practical approaches to autonomy in language learning.....	9
2.3. Teacher’s role in promoting autonomy.....	13
2.4. Autonomy and teenage learners.....	16
2.5. Informal learning	19
3. The present study	22
3.1. The aim and research questions	22
3.2. Data collection and participants.....	23
3.3. The questionnaire.....	24
3.4. Methods of analysis	25
4. Results and discussion	27
4.1. Goal orientation	29
4.2. Influencing	31
4.3. Metacognition	38
4.4. Activity	44
5. Conclusion	52
5.1. Summary of the aims and results of the present study.....	52
5.2. Implications of the present study	55
5.3. Evaluation of the present study.....	56
5.4. Suggestions for future research.....	57
Bibliography	59
Appendices	64
Appendix 1 (The questionnaire).....	64
Appendix 2 (Original examples in Finnish).....	72

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Overview of the thematic structure of the analysis	28
Table 2: Responses to the statements regarding learning objectives in general and in English classes	29
Table 3: Responses to the statements regarding the possibilities to influence English lessons	32
Table 4: Responses to the statements regarding students' metacognitive activities: awareness, assessment, and working methods	38
Table 5: Responses to the statements regarding teacher support for metacognitive activities: working methods and assessment	40
Table 6: Responses to the statements regarding the participants' experiences on the use of English in their free time	44
Table 7: Responses to the statements regarding the participants' agreement on teacher support with regard to motivating students, explaining the usefulness of language, and discussing the role of own activity in language learning	47
Table 8: Responses to the statements regarding teacher support for the participants' use of English in their free time	48

1. INTRODUCTION

Autonomy is a widely recognized and researched concept in today's educational world. There are several reasons for researching autonomy since it promotes learning quality, democratic societies, life-long learning, different learning opportunities inside and outside of classroom and autonomy is essentially a human right (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012:3). According to Huang and Benson (2013:2), autonomy is a "capacity to take control of one's own learning". Yet, the definition of autonomy includes several different viewpoints, and it has changed over time, from a more individual perspective (cognitive trait, ability) to a more collaborative perspective between the learner and the environment learning takes place (including teachers) (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022). In this study, autonomy is looked both from the perspective of interaction and collaboration with the environment and also from the individual perspective, highlighting the multidimensionality of autonomy. Moreover, in terms of language learning the core element of autonomy for this study is to look at the role of the teacher in students' own experiences and how this affects and builds language learner autonomy.

As learner autonomy has been researched in detail over the last 30 years and more (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012:3), the main point of this study is to investigate middle school students' experiences on autonomy in their English learning in Finland. It is brought up by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012:6) that teachers' beliefs on autonomy affect the different learning opportunities that learners receive in their learning environments. Therefore, this study aims to investigate if students themselves have experienced that autonomy is supported during their EFL lessons at school and if they have experienced autonomy in any form. In addition, the purpose of this study is to find out if the students feel that informal learning and outside classroom contexts are supported by the teacher. The Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014:348) recognizes the possibilities for informal learning since learning English in students' free time has increased. Moreover, it is also noted in the curriculum that this free time learning should be considered when teachers design and plan learning materials and contents (POPS 2014:348). This area has not been researched in detail in the Finnish context. The third reason

for the present study is to investigate an age group that is at a developing stage physically, mentally, and socially (Savolainen 2012:8). Moreover, teenagers are not heavily researched as an age group in foreign language learning, and this study could shed light on how teenagers experience autonomy as language learners.

The background section consists of the most relevant definitions and theoretical framework regarding autonomy in English language learning. First, the construct of autonomy is defined and discussed in relation to language learning. In addition, practical approaches of autonomy are discussed and how those are visible in language classrooms. Autonomy is also discussed from teachers' point of view and how teachers can promote autonomy as the role of teachers in supporting autonomy is significant. Second, as the focus group of the present study was teenaged language learners, relevant definitions regarding adolescence and literature regarding the language learning of teenagers or learning in general are presented. Furthermore, language learning is discussed from an institutional perspective, including the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014). Thirdly, informal learning is defined as a concept closely attached to learner autonomy. The third chapter presents the aim and the research questions of this study, the process of data gathering, and the methods of analysis. The fourth chapter analyses and presents the results and finally, the fifth chapter concludes the present study by discussing the main points in relation to literature and the results. Additionally, discussion for further research in the future is included in the fifth chapter.

2. KEY DEFINITIONS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I will define the most important concepts and discuss research that is essential and form the theoretical framework for the present study. First, I will define autonomy in language learning and how it is seen in relation to learning. Second, the practical approaches for promoting autonomy in and outside the classroom are presented. Third, a discussion and essential research on teacher's role in supporting autonomy in general and in classrooms are included. The fourth section in this chapter presents factors and research regarding teenagers as language learners. In the final section, the role of informal learning in relation to autonomy is discussed in addition to defining the concept and discussing research related to informal English learning.

2.1. Defining autonomy in language learning

Benson and Huang (2013:2) determine autonomy to mean “a capacity to take control of one's learning.” Benson (2013:58) states that is not necessary to define autonomy more clearly than this since control over learning is a process that can take several different forms and dimensions that affect the language learning process. This is also supported by Lamb (2017) as he states that learner autonomy is difficult as a construct since it is dependent on the context, including spatial, cultural, and temporal aspects. However, key concepts in defining autonomy are capacity and control, capacity meaning the potential the individual can do and control having the power to make decisions and acting upon those (Benson and Huang 2013:2-4). Control over learning is described as learning management, the learner thus is responsible for the control of how, when, and where learning occurs (Benson and Huang 2013:5). Other dimensions that can be used to define autonomy in relation to learning are desire, freedom, and ability (Benson and Huang 2013). The ability is related to skills and knowledge the learner has whereas desire refers to the learner's actual intention for carrying out a specific learning exercise and freedom the extent to which learners are granted control of their own learning (Benson and Huang 2013:3-4).

According to Lamb (2017) the constructivist views of autonomy are supporting the idea of an active learner who is engaging within a socio-cultural context to construct knowledge. Kohonen (2006) notes that in sociocultural and socio-constructivist theories learner is seen as an individual with a social identity, participating in different societies and cultures. Furthermore, an individual has access to knowledge, resources, and power and has a selection of social roles that are contextual in addition to the person's identity (Kohonen 2006). Moreover, research on autonomy focuses on ecological approaches to investigate how learning spaces themselves are socially constructed and how learners exploit these spaces in terms of appropriation and transformation (Lamb 2017). Thus, these approaches (in addition to socio-cultural) further deepen the understanding of the dynamic relations learners experience between learning and learning spaces (Lamb 2017).

Moreover, the definition of autonomy can be further explained by the concepts of proactive and reactive autonomy. According to Littlewood (1999:75), proactive autonomy allows learners to determine methods, techniques, and objectives regarding their own learning and learners can evaluate their own learning process. Reactive autonomy enables learners to organize their resources autonomously, however, it does not create its own directions but rather needs a direction to be given that enables students to reach their goals autonomously (Littlewood 1999:75). Furthermore, reactive autonomy offers stimulus for learners for autonomous action after a direction has been initiated (Littlewood 1999:75-76). To summarize the main difference between proactive and reactive autonomy, according to Littlewood (1999:75) proactive autonomy is regulating both the direction of activity and the activities themselves whereas reactive autonomy focuses on regulating the activity after the direction has been given.

Autonomy is recognized by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2020) as it presents the learner as an active and social individual "acting in the social world and exerting agency in learning process" (CEFR 2020:28). In addition, this creates a change in teaching and designing learning contents, highlighting learner autonomy and engagement in learning (CEFR 2020:28). It can be seen in the Finnish education as well since the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) emphasizes a view of a learner that is an active individual in collaboration with the surrounding environment (POPS 2014:17). Learners can set own learning goals and are conscious of their own learning processes and thus learn to function more self-directedly (POPS 2014:17). Therefore, the pedagogy used in the Finnish classrooms is leaning towards an autonomous, active learner. Language learning that promotes autonomy should be based on an interactive and dialogical approach (Kohonen 2006). In the approach learners are considered as individual persons and the support for comprehensive growth is offered (Kohonen 2006). Moreover, emphasis in language teaching is on meaningful learning that takes personal experiences and the role of reflection into account (Kohonen 2006).

As Legault (2018) points out, autonomy includes the feeling of overseeing one's life and individuals are actively interacting with their environments. Legault's (2018) view supports a similar view in language learning frameworks such as Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education. In

addition, as Benson and Huang (2013) note, personal relevance is also important for autonomous learning. According to Benson and Huang (2013:10), learning that is personally relevant is supporting the learner's own needs and purposes that they have recognized. Moreover, personal relevance can be found from the learning environments if they offer affordances for learners since individuals can discover different learning possibilities in specific learning environments (Benson and Huang 2013:11). Learners also tend to follow their own agendas rather than the one given by their teacher in the form of formal instruction (Benson 2013:79-80). Therefore, if learners follow their own agendas, they find personal relevance in fulfilling those (Benson and Huang 2013:11). Autonomy supporting contexts that enable the learners to be self-direct are also developing learner autonomy (Legault 2018).

A learning environment that is autonomous assists students to connect with their motivations, identities, and personal interests since English is also seen as a medium to express oneself and one's own identity through language (Ushioda 2011). Therefore, practices used in classrooms to promote autonomy are likely to contribute to learners' values, motivation, and identities as language users whereas the practices that do not support autonomy may affect learners' behavior to be more controlled in relation to their own identities and self-expression as language users (Ushioda 2011). According to Ushioda (2011), classroom practices that are promoting autonomy allow students to express their own identities, participate actively, make choices and decisions but also to negotiate and explore different opportunities regarding their own learning. Willingness and ability can also be defined as core elements of autonomy, and if learners possess these traits, they are more motivated to learn independently (Yu 2020). This is discussed in section 2.3. Teacher's role in promoting autonomy, however, it is worth to mention that the teacher must balance between institutional and educational limitations to what extent the students are given freedom and when they have consequences for their actions (Wang 2017).

Therefore, according to Joshi (2011:15) autonomy can be defined as a "complex socio-cognitive system, subject to internal and external constraints". Autonomy includes one's capacities, abilities, willingness, choices, planning, decisions, for example (Joshi 2011:15). Joshi (2015:11) further adds that autonomy is dynamic, unpredictable, adaptive, and sensitive to feedback in its non-linear form. This complex view is also supported by Lamb (2017:180) as he writes about defining autonomy "as a complex, and dynamic construct, intertwined with other complex ideological, political, social, epistemological, and pedagogical constructs such as beliefs, dependence / independence / interdependence, identity, knowledge, motivation, policy, situatedness, and SLA theory, there is no single approach to operationalizing learner autonomy in language learning". Moreover, Han (2020:154) states that due to the subjective experience of autonomy it may be the single most difficult question to answer to.

To conclude, it is difficult to define autonomy in language learning using only one correct definition. Autonomous language learning is seen in the conception of learning as is stated in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2020) and in the Finnish context, the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014). Autonomy means the capacity to take control of one's own learning and for an individual the level autonomy varies

by control, ability, personal relevance, desire, and freedom (Benson and Huang 2013). However, autonomy is also linked with motivation (Ushioda 2011), contextual traits and dynamic constructs, beliefs, social interaction, and pedagogical approaches (Lamb 2017) to name only a few important aspects. As mentioned in the introduction, the present study defines autonomy in language learning as the capacity to take control of one's own learning and it is occurring in the dynamic relationship of the individual and the environment, including affordances, teachers, learning environment, and a socio-constructivist conception of learning (Kohonen 2006).

2.2. Practical approaches to autonomy in language learning

There are various approaches to supporting autonomy in practice. In this section, I will present practical approaches to promote autonomy in language learning and teaching (adapted from Benson 2013:125-197). The approaches are resource-based, curriculum-based, classroom-based, teacher-based, learner-based, and technology-based (Benson 2013). Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2022) point out that these approaches have had two objectives. Firstly, the goal has been to provide learners the possibilities for decision making in relation to their own learning and how it could be done more independently, and secondly to enable possibilities for more self-directed learning (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022). The approaches are important in developing learner autonomy since learners need teacher's guidance, facilities, learning materials and different resources for the development to occur in a supportive context (Han 2020:155).

According to Benson (2013), resource-based approaches emphasize learning which occurs without educational learning materials used in schools, for example. Self-access centers, parts of resource-based approaches, are defined by Benson (2013:128) as "quasi-independent units within language teaching departments with their own philosophy and routines for engaging learners in language study". More broadly determined, self-access centers are facilities or resources that are directly made available to learners, and those can be videos, audio, computers, Internet, TV, or printed materials, to name a few (Benson 2013:128). However, even if teachers offer resource support for learners by providing language learning resources and guidance, it is up to the learners' willingness if they use these resources effectively (Işık and Balçıkanlı 2020). Also, Wijaya (2019) notes that resource-based learning materials should still be evaluated to sustain the usability of them due to rapidly changing and developing technology and information. Moreover, letting students explore diverse resources may improve learning achievements and awareness of their learning process (Wijaya 2019).

Other practical approaches are tandem learning and distance learning. Tandem learning usually occurs in different exchange projects that are planned by teachers in different countries, and these are usually highly structured (Benson 2013:131). The main function is thus to create possibilities for authentic language learning as students learn from each other (Benson 2013:132). Distance learning requires learners to learn autonomously since learners spend little to no time in educational or institutional settings to study at home, at work or elsewhere

(Benson 2013:133). Yet another approach under resource-based category is self-instruction. According to Benson (2013), it means the ways in which people teach themselves different foreign languages. In addition, different learning environments need to be flexible to support autonomy, for example designing self-access facilities, online learning platforms, and resource sharing so that they offer learners choice, interaction, and chances for reflection (Chateau and Tassinari 2021).

The last approach in the resource-based category is out-of-class learning. This is defined as the activities that complement classroom learning and is typically initiated by the learner (Benson 2013:139). Furthermore, out-of-class learning may work as a teacher-free environment for learners where learners can take a full control of their learning, which in turn promotes their autonomy (Işık and Balçıkanlı 2020). Alvarez Ayure, Peña, and Martínez Orjuela (2018) argue that using Web-based learning activities outside of class offers possibilities for strengthening what is learned at school but also studying out-of-class may further support learners' digital literacy skills and it enables learning at one's own pace. According to Benson (2013:139-140), the extent to which learners engage in out-of-class learning may vary due to individual autonomy levels. One reason for varying levels of autonomy is that learners use authentic materials, include enjoyment and own interests in language learning (Benson 2013:139-140).

Curriculum-based approaches are extending the notion of learner control to the curriculum including goals and plan making for the future, process syllabi, reflection of past experiences, awareness raising of learning strategies, and needs analysis (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022). Process syllabus essentially means that learners are expected to execute the major decisions regarding the procedures and contents of learning in co-operation with their teachers (Benson 2013:176). However, according to Benson (2013:178), process syllabus does not necessarily suggest that the decision making is negotiated at all levels but can function as a framework for identifying the scale of decisions that are negotiable and the levels in the curriculum that are applicable for this approach. According to Alvarez Ayure et al. (2018), curricula could be enhanced by designing and using context related units, tasks, and strategies for achieving learning goals.

The strength of the curriculum-based approaches is that those address the notion of learner control with a holistic view (Benson 2013). In addition, there is an equal emphasis on self-management skills and control over cognitive and content dimensions of learning (Benson 2013:183). Moreover, in curriculum-based approaches there is an expectation of learners developing the capacity to take control over learning by practicing autonomy at a myriad of levels (Benson 2013:183). Learners cannot be left without assistance, rather, the effectiveness of curriculum-based approaches depends on the scaffolding students receive that supports them in making decisions, otherwise there might be little help for learners (Benson 2013:183). Furthermore, Alvarez Ayure et al. (2018) argue that there are benefits for autonomous learning if students practice and train personal goal setting, monitoring their learning performance, and assessing the results of their learning. Therefore, scaffolding and support (Benson 2013) are

necessary for learners so that they learn to monitor their own learning and goal setting for achieving higher degree of autonomy, as Alvarez Ayure et al. (2018) state.

Classroom-based approach is highlighting learner control over the planning and evaluation of classroom learning and the main principles include planning and implementing classroom learning and evaluation and self-assessment (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022). The core idea in classroom-based approaches is that by allowing learners to make some choices in the activities they complete themselves, it might be an efficient way to offer individuals suitable learning experiences (Benson 2013:165). In addition, versatile use of collaboration in classroom, for example group work, pair work and peer teaching have been considered useful for developing learner autonomy due to the shift of the traditional teacher role to activating students (Benson 2013:166). As Chateau and Tassinari (2021) state, “autonomy is not learning in isolation” and therefore, all kinds of learning communities, including informal and formal, should be encouraged and involve all the members of the classroom, including teachers.

Self-assessment, a part of the classroom-based approach, has useful qualities for learner autonomy (Benson 2013). According to Benson (2013:168), formative aspects of internal assessment are more beneficial to the learner than the external assessment of their skillfulness. Self-assessment may help learners to become more aware of their goals, learning processes, and expectations (Butler and Lee 2010). In addition, learners can reflect their own understanding against the goals of the curriculum (Butler and Lee 2010). Moreover, self-assessment can assist learners to determine what is needed to reach their own learning objectives (Butler and Lee 2010). According to Benson (2013), it is challenging to make a distinction between self-assessment of learning results and overseeing one’s own learning process in self-directed learning since self-assessment is continuous, influences planning, entails reflection of objectives, learning activities, and assessment criteria. It is important that self-assessment (for example portfolios, tests, or progress cards) instruments do not concentrate merely on abilities or proficiency but encourage to formative self-monitoring and include a recurrent procedure to the evaluation of goals and plans (Benson 2013:170).

However, the degree to which extent self-assessment and learner control of classroom activities can be carried out is likely to be restricted due to curricular or institutional guidelines and external testing unless the learners are participating in study programmes without external assessment requirements (Benson 2013:172). Yet, self-assessment can offer continuous, personalized, and formative assessment and combined with teacher assessment it can enhance teacher assessment to be more effective (Harris 1997). Wider educational, institutional, social, and ideological constraints may prevent a more complete implementation of learner control even if the transfer of control over planning and evaluation have advantages for learners, yet curricular restrictions can be discussed and evaluated to increase critical awareness about control over classroom activities (Benson 2013:173). To conclude, learners can practice control over different aspects of their learning if given the opportunities and support to do so and this can be practiced collaboratively in classrooms (Benson 2013:173-174).

Teacher-based approaches highlight the role of the teacher in fostering autonomy and the role teacher education, including advising and counselling the learners (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022). In addition, these approaches entail providing support in different areas, for example technical and psychosocial (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022). Also, the approaches include a change in traditional roles that includes teacher autonomy (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022). Benson (2013:185) notes that in these approaches, teachers themselves need to demonstrate a degree of autonomy in their work and the role of the teacher functions within the framework of facilitator, helper, counsellor, adviser, resource, and coordinator, to name a few. Furthermore, teacher autonomy can be understood as a professional capacity that is associated with the ability to control the processes contributing to teaching and the ability to control personal development as a teacher (Benson 2013:189). However, language advising should be associated with learning methodology rather than linguistic content, and it should be responsive instead of directive (Benson 2013:191). Similar to Benson (2013), Chateau and Tassinari (2021) conclude that teachers must be prepared to intervene as facilitators and offer support pedagogically, methodologically, technically, and also personally. To be able to execute all the diverse roles, teachers need the possibilities for professional and personal development, including institutional support (Chateau and Tassinari 2021).

Learner-based approaches are emphasizing the direct production of behavioral and psychological changes inside the learner (Benson 2013:154). Advice giving and training, use of learning strategies and techniques and learner development function well if they are integrated into the classroom activities (Benson 2013:154-155). Therefore, fostering learner autonomy needs a learner-centered approach that includes both individual and social learning possibilities (Chateau and Tassinari 2021). According to Benson (2013:158), learner-development activities can strengthen language learning performance if they include the following perspectives: context, learning preference, and learning style. However, there are certain problems regarding learning strategies. Learners might not develop their autonomy if learners merely learn about different strategies without considering those as helpful in constructing knowledge (Benson 2013:158). Also, it might not be beneficial for developing learner autonomy if learning is considered only as completing tasks the teacher has prepared (Benson 2013:158). The approaches aim to enable learners to take larger control since they provide learners with the skills that are needed to exploit the learning opportunities (Benson 2013:161). Moreover, Benson (2013) continues to explain that open-ended and reflective approaches are more suitable for developing autonomy than explicit instruction, yet, combining the methods may turn out to be more effective in terms of learner development.

Technology-based approaches consist of independent interaction with educational technologies that include the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022). Digital technologies have become more available, portable, and omnipresent in today's world, therefore enabling language learning in multiple settings (at home, work, free time, travel) (Honarзад and Rassaei 2019). According to Benson (2013:148-149), the most significant aspect of these technologies is the possibility of using these both inside and outside classroom environments. Internet has offered the

access to learning resources to learners so that they can learn at their chosen time, place, and pace (Honarзад and Rassaei 2019). Moreover, these approaches support self-directed learning (Benson 2013:150).

Technology-based approaches are autonomy-supportive in three ways: firstly, placing the learner in control of the learning process, secondly allowing the wider access to authentic target language sources and thirdly, allowing wider access to interactive use of language that is also authentic (Benson 2013:152). Research shows that a positive correlation exists between technology-based-out-of-class-language-learning-activities (TBOCLLA) and learner autonomy, self-efficacy, and motivation (Honarзад and Rassaei 2019). Furthermore, Honarзад and Rassaei (2019) explain that new technologies, smartphones, and tablets have opened more possibilities for learners to practice their language learning skills out of class. Honarзад and Rassaei (2019) conclude that it is essential that teachers encourage their learners to actively use technology (mobile phone applications and computers) as a medium to create possibilities for L2 use and communication.

In conclusion, there are several different approaches to fostering autonomy in practice. The approaches presented above were resource-based, curriculum-based, classroom-based, teacher-based, learner-based, and technology-based (Benson 2013). These approaches are essential in understanding learner autonomy for the present study, and how it functions in practice in language classrooms. As Lamb (2017) notes, there exists a powerful argument that the concept of learner autonomy is insignificant unless it can be referred to practice. Since teacher's role in supporting learner autonomy is of interest in the present study in addition to learner experiences, this section offered a useful summary of the different approaches teachers can utilize in classrooms.

2.3. Teacher's role in promoting autonomy

In this section, teachers' role in promoting autonomy is discussed through previous research on the roles that teachers may have to change to promote autonomy, in other words transferring more responsibility for the learners over their own learning instead of more traditional teacher-led classroom management (Wang 2017; Han 2017; Han 2020; Kohonen 2006). In addition to roles, this section discusses the constraints teachers face and how that might affect autonomy (Wang 2017). Moreover, teachers' own beliefs and conceptions of autonomy affect learner autonomy and how teachers can foster autonomy are also discussed (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012; Kohonen 2006). Previous research on developing learner autonomy also concentrates on freedom, educational power, and democracy (Vieira 2020; Intraboonsom, Darasawang and Reinders 2020).

According to Wang (2017), teacher autonomy entails learner autonomy as well since teachers learn throughout their professional careers. Moreover, teachers must balance work between

educational and institutional constraints, and this in turn affects learner autonomy (Wang 2017). Wang (2017) addresses the issue of flexibility, the implementation of the curriculum and the directions in the curriculum create limitations to what extent teachers give learners freedom. Moreover, moving the control from teachers to students is an essential element in learner autonomy, yet the control shift is complicated due to constraints teachers face (Wang 2017). In addition, the extent to which the freedom that learners are given is “real” and when learners face consequences of their actions may be challenging to determine (Wang 2017). This is also supported by Han (2017:134) as he states that language teachers need to change their roles, in other words, execute the control shift to assist learners to develop their own autonomy. Foreign language teachers have a major role in affecting the internal or external factors that influence the development of learner autonomy (Han 2017:134).

Kohonen (2006) argues that the roles of teachers and students are complementary, and it is not possible for the other side to proclaim one-sided declaration of independence. According to Kohonen (2006), the roles can be negotiated with a social change in who does, says or decides something. Moreover, he (2006) notes that these complementary roles entail that teacher’s obligations to perform acts, such as assessment of student proficiency, can be performed by the students in the form of self-assessment and peer-assessment, for example, if the conditions for this are created in the classroom. Thus, teachers offer scaffolding for the learners so that they provide contextual support by creating a safe, but also challenging learning space, in which learners are allowed to make errors and the participation is encouraged by the teacher (Kohonen 2006). He (2006) also points out that language teachers must explain why students are asked to reflect on and assess their own learning and why students are encouraged to take on greater responsibility over their learning to promote learner autonomy.

There are also differences to what extent teachers include learners in the decisions that affect their learning, for example assessment or learning materials (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012). In addition, to what extent autonomy is promoted in classrooms is affected by the teachers’ own conceptions (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012). According to Kohonen (2006) pedagogical traditions are ingrained in the ways of thinking and behaving, therefore, teachers need an intentional effort to become aware of them so that one is able to replace and modify them. He also (2006) notes that teachers’ own beliefs affect the perceptions teachers have regarding the courses of action in different situations and teachers usually are unconscious of these invisible sources of influence. Therefore, it is essential that teachers gain awareness of their own educational beliefs and the consequences of utilizing those beliefs in teaching to further develop and review their professional identities (Kohonen 2006).

According to Han (2017) teaching never takes place in a social vacuum. Thus, it is important that teachers themselves understand autonomy as an educational goal, albeit it is an intricate process (Han 2017:134). It is essential to consider teacher and learner autonomy as phenomena that are connected to each other (Vieira 2020). Professional autonomy develops by facing constraints and finding suitable measures to meet learners’ own needs and interests to secure a democratic education (Vieira 2020). Furthermore, the level of autonomy depends on the extent

to which teachers delegate power to their students (Intraboonsom, Darasawang and Reinders 2020). However, to delegate educational power to the students means that learners need assistance and support for the roles of active participants (Kohonen 2006). In addition, Intraboonsom et al. (2020) state that learner autonomy in language classroom includes giving students a sense of ownership of their own learning, introducing different learning strategies, and providing opportunities to make choices and decisions.

Intraboonsom et al. (2020) investigated how teachers explain and give reasons to students with regard to classroom activities and in which ways the activities are completed. However, it was stated that it might not be enough to explain what is done, rather, if teachers explain why and how something is done, it might carry a greater role in developing learner autonomy (Intraboonsom et al. 2020). Moreover, Intraboonsom et al. (2020) describe that teachers could promote learner autonomy by using different explanatory approaches with students instead of explaining the mere “what” is done. These approaches are called suggestions (explaining what is done in the classroom), demonstrations (describing how something is done), and explanations (giving reasons why something is done). Therefore, it could be useful to include these different approaches in classroom instructions to promote learner autonomy (Intraboonsom et al. 2020). Furthermore, Tran (2020) investigates learner attitudes towards learner autonomy regarding English vocabulary learning and concludes that teachers should motivate their students and encourage them to plan their own learning, set goals, self-evaluate, and manage their own vocabulary learning. According to Tran (2020), it is also essential that teachers themselves continue to check the learning processes of their students in general.

Han (2020:7) concludes that it is not only the language teachers’ responsibility (in terms of career, ethical objectives, and obligations) to promote language learners’ communicative competence, but to also facilitate learner autonomy. Therefore, changing the traditional roles and considering individual needs is something that language teachers can do to promote autonomy in classrooms (Han 2020). Thus, as presented by Han (2020), the teachers’ role should be facilitating, supporting, and fostering autonomy. Moreover, according to Han (2020) it is important to form a better understanding of teacher and learner autonomy for teacher students as well during education and teacher training, so that it is possibly to apply the knowledge in practice in the working life.

Lamb (2011) points out that teachers need to realize that not everyone learns the same way or has a similar learner identity. Learners who possess high motivation and autonomy over their learning can nevertheless change for the negative due to the limitations in the environment or the environment itself can be the reason for negative development of learner autonomy (Lamb 2011:77-79). Moreover, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) conclude that not all learners are willing or have the capacity to exploit the possibilities to practice their own autonomy. The differences in learner autonomy might lead to further limitations for teachers as well (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012).

To summarize, teacher’s role in fostering autonomy is essential. Teachers can support learner autonomy by executing the control shift (Wang 2017), which means giving more responsibility,

freedom, and control to the learners instead of the traditional teacher-led roles (Han 2020). Moreover, teachers can offer scaffolding and support to promote learner autonomy (Kohonen 2006). It is also important that learners are given opportunities to take more responsibility of their own learning (Intraboonsom et al. 2020). Teachers' own beliefs of autonomy affect how it is promoted in classrooms (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012), and it is essential that teachers are aware of their own conceptions and educational beliefs in order to review their professional identities (Kohonen 2006). However, teachers face curricular or institutional constraints (Han 2017), and the amount of freedom and choice the learners are given might be limited (Wang 2017). Naturally, learners are individuals, and the level of autonomy differs between one learner to another, and the environment may also affect learner autonomy (Lamb 2011).

2.4. Autonomy and teenage learners

There exists relatively little information on teenagers as language learners. Yet, the present study is interested in teenagers as an age group and how autonomy is related to their experiences regarding their own language learning, including the educational and informal context. This section presents the definitions of adolescence (Spano 2004), social relations (Kohonen 2006), and the factors that affect individual autonomy. As learners are individuals, the experience of autonomy is always subjective (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022). Moreover, the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) is discussed since it includes the concept of learning and the methods used in teenagers' language learning in Finland.

According to Spano (2004), adolescence is a time of change, including not only physical, but also cognitive, socio-emotional, and interpersonal changes. Moreover, as teenagers grow, they are influenced by external factors such as family, social relationships, school, media, communities, culture, to name a few (Spano 2004). During early adolescence (age 10-14), the identity is starting to emerge, and it is formed by both external and internal factors (Spano 2004). Also, the influence of peer groups is essential and close friendships are becoming more important at the age of 10-14 (Spano 2004). During middle adolescence, approximately at the age of 15-16 years, peer group is very influential as the psychological withdrawal from parents takes place (Spano 2004). According to Legault (2018:3), instead of defining self-worth as dependent on social approval or other people's expectations, autonomously highly functioning individuals feel freer to express themselves. This means that these individuals are more self-congruent in selecting their goals, activities, and different actions that are supporting their own profound needs (Legault 2018:3). However, in teenagers' lives social approval of peers becomes important.

Friends and peer groups lay the foundation for improving social skills and offering support as there might be distancing from the family (Coleman 2021:70). According to Coleman (2021) teenager brain is more responsive to reward-system than any other type of feedback, and this could be further considered in schools and education in general. In addition, the level of social

skills affects the interaction in classrooms and to what extent working and collaboration are possible between learners and teachers (Coleman 2021:84). Moreover, in terms of language learning, social-interactive groups have an essential role in the growth of motivation, especially intrinsic motivation (Kohonen 2006). This highlights the importance of the interaction that takes place between individual and the social learning environment (Kohonen 2006). Furthermore, belonging to a group supports social relatedness which in turn promotes learner autonomy (Kohonen 2006).

There exist various, complex, and intricate reasons that affect learner autonomy and its development (Han 2020). As discussed in section 2.1., the notions of personal relevance (Huang and Benson 2013) and motivation (Ushioda 2011) are affecting this age group's learning process as any other learners. However, the experience of autonomy is always subjective (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022) and teenagers as language learners and users are individuals, guided by their own motivation, personal relevance they find, identities and other numerous traits. Furthermore, Lamb (2011) notes that it is important to understand how pedagogies that support autonomy can relate to identity development in varying cultural contexts, and identity and motivation are not merely contextually or culturally bound, but those need to be understood with regard to complex individual differences. Thus, teaching that promotes autonomy takes individual student motivation with broader goals and values of education into account (Ushioda 2011).

Lamb (2011) notes that there does not exist much research on secondary school students and their identities as second language learners. According to Lamb (2011), research on this area could offer information in relation to pedagogical implications and lifelong learning. Kohonen (2006) states that students themselves are a prominent resource for their own learning as well as for each other's learning and by taking charge of their own learning they might develop their autonomy as students, but also as language users. Thus, the degree of learner autonomy is developing continually, and it varies from person to person (Han 2020). Yet, some research exists on teenage learners in terms of developing autonomy and the importance of social relationships.

Yeung (2019) points out in her study that in the Chinese context, young learners aged between 12-16 developed experiences on autonomy through EFL process writing. The main changes after applying a process-based writing program (including peer feedback sessions) were growth in students' self-reliance, not being so dependent on the teacher, enhanced reflectivity, and development of metacognitive knowledge (Yeung 2019). However, the results showed that not every student experienced autonomy strongly, and this could be due to personalities or differences in attitudes towards the process (Yeung 2019). In addition, even if learners developed independence from the teacher, it did not necessarily mean that they increasingly took charge of their own learning (Yeung 2019). However, more research is needed on the experience of autonomy and teenage learners in different areas of EFL lessons in general. Hence, this area remains essential for the present study.

Matrić, Brumen, & Košir (2019) investigated the roles of social relationships in Slovenian 11-14 years-old learners' EFL learning. It was discovered that academic peer support from the students' classmates increased learner motivation and improved functioning at school due to higher emotional and behavioral engagement (Matrić et al. 2019). In addition, the results showed that if learners experienced active personal and academic support from their peers, there was an increase in their behavioral engagement (Matrić et al. 2019). This in turn was increasing activity, participation, and interest in EFL classes as personal support reduced EFL anxiety when learners felt cared by their classmates (Matrić et al. 2019).

According to Matrić et al. (2019), the peer support affected the fear of communicating by reducing it. Also, peer support reduced the fear of negative assessment and tests in classrooms (Matrić et al. 2019). In relation to learner autonomy, this could be explained by Kohonen's (2006) note of the social relatedness. Being a member of a group may establish social relatedness with peer students, which in turn promotes learner autonomy (Kohonen 2006). This further highlights the importance of peer group for EFL learning of teenagers. However, as Matrić et al. (2019) note, the key facilitator of peer support in EFL classes is the teacher. Teacher's role in promoting learner autonomy is versatile. Facilitating the learning process and offering methodological support is essential instead of explaining mere linguistic content (Benson 2013). Furthermore, for those students who received lower grades in EFL, there was an increasing need for extra academic support since receiving lower grades negatively affected learners' emotional engagement (Matrić et al. 2019). Moreover, the students who had lower grades did not experience the classes as interesting and enjoyable than students with higher grades (Matrić et al. 2019). Benson and Huang's note (2013) that personal relevance, meaningfulness, and motivation (Ushioda 2011) affect learner autonomy in language learning, and therefore, lower grades may also be reflected negatively on learner autonomy.

It is essential to take the Finnish curriculum for basic education into account since it directs learning and what kind of teaching, approaches, and guidelines are included in teenage learners' language teaching (7th, 8th, and 9th grade students in the Finnish context). The Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) emphasizes that foreign language learning for seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students should encourage learners to communicate in authentic environments, work interactively and in co-operation (POPS 2014:348). Moreover, students are encouraged to make choices, and teaching should include a variety of topics and action-based working methods (POPS 2014:348).

In addition, it is stated that interests of learners are taken into account when choosing texts and materials, and the emphasis is on building connections between different languages and the use of English in students' spare time is acknowledged (POPS 2014:348). The Finnish National Core Curriculum also notes that learners should work in diverse ways and actively in collaboration with others, thus, the objective is that language use is appropriate, natural, and meaningful for students (POPS 2014:350). The conception of learning in the curriculum aligns with the conception of learning in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

(2020) that also supports and promotes learner engagement, agency, autonomy, interaction, communication, and authenticity in language teaching and learning.

To conclude, there are several reasons that affect learner autonomy for teenager learners, yet, not much research exists regarding this age group as language learners. In addition, individual differences (Lamb 2011) and the subjectivity of autonomy (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022) affect the level of teenage learner autonomy. Also, autonomy varies depending on the level of motivation (Ushioda 2011) and personal relevance (Benson and Huang 2013) among other factors. Social relationships are important and might benefit EFL learning (Matrić et al. 2019). The English language teaching that is directed for the Finnish seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students emphasizes autonomous learning by describing an active learner, collaboration, authenticity, meaningfulness, and interaction. Moreover, students' interests are seen as important additions and those should be considered in language teaching (POPS 2014).

2.5. Informal learning

Autonomy enables learning outside school and classroom contexts (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022) and therefore informal learning is a relevant concept for the present study. Informal learning is closely linked to autonomy, as the notions of personal relevance (Benson and Huang 2013), motivation (Ushioda 2011), resource-based and technology-based learning approaches (Benson 2013; Honarзад and Rassaei 2019) are all emphasizing the learner actively utilizing various resources for language learning. Informal language learning can promote autonomy as the learners can exploit various learning resources. Particularly in today's world, learning autonomously using technology in free time can further promote autonomous learning process of English. Moreover, the present study is interested in finding out how autonomous learners are in their free time and whether there is support from the teacher to actively engage with English in the students' free time. In this section, I will discuss some of the main definitions of informal learning and how it differs from formal learning and non-formal learning. In addition, some previous research on the benefits of informal learning is presented.

To foster language learners' psychological autonomy, teachers can raise awareness of life-long learning by encouraging their students to practice the contents that are learned in the classroom outside classroom (Intraboonsom, Darasawang and Reinders 2020). According to Honarзад and Rassaei (2019), out-of-class language learning is a platform that assists learners to develop their autonomy. Furthermore, it is useful to help learners to become aware of the value of autonomous learning both inside and outside classroom so that students may promote autonomous learning in daily life and learn more efficiently (Yu 2020).

Singh (2015:20) refers to UNESCO Guidelines on the Recognition, Validation, and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal learnings (UIL 2012). According to these guidelines (UIL 2012), formal learning is defined taking place in educational or training

institutions and there are diplomas or qualifications that are given by relevant authorities. In addition, formal learning is heavily structured by educational requirements such as curricula and other teaching-learning requirements (UIL 2012, cited in Singh 2015). Non-formal learning is more flexible albeit it can be structured, yet it occurs alternatively and in addition to formal learning and it takes place in community-based contexts such as workplaces or other civil society organizations (UIL 2012, cited in Singh 2015). One of the most prominent concepts for the present study is informal learning, and according to the UIL (2012) guidelines it can be defined as learning that happens in everyday life in various contexts such as family, workplace, communities, and via individuals' personal interests and activities.

According to Callanan, Cervantes and Loomis (2011), the definition of informal learning may vary in its meaning, but it is a life-long process and pursuit. According to them (2017), learning happens in several places, not merely in school or in other educational contexts. Learning can occur in communities, at home, at workplaces and it is not tied to age since adults also continue to learn (Callanan et al. 2011). Thus, informal language learning occurs in an environment that is socially active and collaborative (Callanan et al 2011). Moreover, the tools and affordances that promote informal learning process are meaningful for the learner (Callanan et al. 2011). Moreover, informal learning is learner-controlled, and it is not linked to any institutions (Trinder 2017). According to Trinder (2017), due to the availability of new technologies and the proliferation of them (network and mobile), learners are exposed to English in informal settings to an increasing extent.

There are benefits of exposure to language input outside classrooms. Peters (2018) investigated vocabulary learning methods that learners aged between Flemish 16-19 years used in vocabulary learning in their spare time. According to Peters' study (2018), the most popular and frequent types of input are songs, TV-programmes with or without subtitles, movies, books, magazines, and Internet. Trinder (2017) notes that younger or lower-level students might be less aware of the value and potential their everyday actions (especially digital activities) offer for their learning and how these can affect their deliberate language learning. Therefore, it might benefit students if there is an explicit link between informal learning and learners' everyday activities (Trinder 2017). Web technology has made it possible to watch media such as films and television series via Internet to promote learning (Trinder 2017). Learners have formed conceptions about the technologies they use to promote their own language learning informally (Trinder 2017). Therefore, informal learning involves intentional choice of language, rather than implicit (Trinder 2017).

To conclude, informal learning occurs in free time, beyond institutional contexts and personal interests usually guide the learner to learn in various places (UIL 2012, cited in Singh 2015). Also, informal learning can happen in socially active contexts and the environment may offer the affordances that support informal learning (Callanan et al. 2011). In today's world, technology has a great role in informal learning as students are continuously exposed to English in their spare time (Trinder 2017). Also, there are benefits to English learning that informal learning advances (Peters 2018). Moreover, it is important that students are made aware of the

potential of informal learning. It might be beneficial that especially younger learners are made aware of informal learning even if informal learning includes intentionality rather than implicit participation (Trinder 2017).

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

In this chapter, I will present and discuss the aim and the research questions of this study. In addition, I will discuss the reasons for choosing the participants in this study and present further information regarding the participants' age and grades at the time of data collection. Following, I will present and discuss the data collection process. Lastly, the methods of analysis are described.

3.1. The aim and research questions

As discussed in the background section, there exists relatively little research on autonomy in the Finnish context and from the point of view of teenagers, even though autonomy has been researched for decades (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012). Autonomy is seen in the pedagogical approaches and the conception of learning that are supported by CEFR (2020) and the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) and it can be adapted into practice by the approaches presented by Benson (2013) and Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2022). The role of the teacher has also been discussed as important in fostering autonomy, yet, working under institutional limitations might affect promoting autonomy in classrooms (Wang 2017). Moreover, teachers' own conceptions of and ideas on autonomy affect how it is implemented in classrooms (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012). In addition, teenage learners are not heavily researched as an age group in language learning per se. This study aims to shed light on their experiences on autonomy in EFL learning in classrooms and in their free time. However, it is important to recognize that all learners are individuals, and the experience of autonomy is subjective.

Moreover, informal learning is recognized as an important concept in EFL learning and it should be supported by the teacher (POPS 2014). Yet, no prior research exists on whether students themselves experience teacher support for their autonomous EFL learning during their

spare time in the Finnish context. Thus, the focus of this study is to investigate Finnish middle school students' experiences on autonomy in their EFL lessons and during their free time. In addition, the role of the teacher is considered in fostering autonomy. The present study addresses the research gap by seeking answers to the following research questions:

1. What kind of experiences do Finnish middle school students have of autonomy in their EFL learning?
2. How the students view the role of a teacher in supporting autonomy during their EFL classes?
3. In which ways do the students think the role of informal learning is considered by the teacher during English lessons?
4. Which experiences do students have of autonomy in their free time regarding English language learning?

3.2. Data collection and participants

As Spano (2004) defined early adolescence and middle adolescence occurring between 10-16 years, this whole age group would have been too large for the present study. Therefore, the group was limited to Finnish middle school, including seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students, approximately 13-16-year-old students. Furthermore, this age group has learned English for several years since they have started their English studies on the third grade. Hence, it could be expected that the participants were experienced English learners and answering the survey would not be overwhelmingly difficult. However, it needs to be noted that due to the age, language experience, and other individual differences among the respondents, some questions might have been more challenging to answer than others.

The participants were from two Finnish middle schools. Due to ethical reasons, the location of the schools is not mentioned in the study. The schools were contacted in December 2021 and January 2022. The data was collected during January and February 2022. Altogether 85 students responded to the questionnaire. However, the answers do not represent all the Finnish teenagers' experiences per se and therefore no larger generalizations can be made on the basis of the results. The table below presents a summary of the participant information.

Grade	N	%
7 th	20	24
8 th	34	40
9 th	31	36
Total	85	100
Gender	N	%

Male	40	47
Female	40	47
Other	5	6
Total	85	100

Since the respondents were underaged, I informed the parents of the survey and offered a possibility to contact me if they had any questions. I sent the notification letter to the schools in addition to my survey so that the teachers could pass on the message. In addition, there are regional differences in Finland in relation to research permissions and protocols, and data collection was done in accordance with the local protocols. Ethicality of the data collection process was considered while collecting the data and I was aware of the ethical responsibility with regard to underaged participants.

3.3. The questionnaire

I used a questionnaire since questionnaires are useful instruments to gather information about different opinions, values, and the way humans act (Vehkalahti 2014:11). The questionnaire was made with Webropol, a platform provided by the University of Jyväskylä. The survey of this study consisted of Likert-scale statements and open-ended questions. Likert-scale is a beneficial tool since it allows the participants to express how much they agree or disagree with any statement presented (Joshi et al. 2015). For this study, the most useful qualities to measure with Likert-scale were agreement and frequency. As Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) explain, the Likert-scale is reliable and straightforward. Therefore, the Likert-scale was the most suitable option for gathering data on the experiences, agreements, disagreements, and frequency of the experiences regarding autonomy in the closed-ended statements. The open-ended questions asked the students to elaborate on their experiences in their own words.

Open-ended questions are not suitable for long answers due to the nature of questionnaires being more quantitative, however, they can still offer enrichment in addition to the closed-ended questions by allowing a freer expression (Dörnyei and Taguchi 2010:36). In addition, the participants were not expected to write long answers, and most answers to the open-ended questions were not longer than one sentence. The open-ended questions still granted a freer expression and elaboration for the students of the themes in the questionnaire. The open-ended questions were used in the analysis to further support the statistical and numerical data and deepen the understanding of the themes in the questionnaire. The main themes in the analysis were based on the students' responses to the open-ended questions and the close-ended statements.

The survey (see Appendix 1) was based on the background literature, especially taking influence from Benson (2013), National Core Curriculum (2014), Wang (2017), Han (2017),

Trinder (2017), and Kohonen (2006). As the questionnaire was based on the background literature, the themes chosen for the analysis were visible in the questionnaire statements and in the open-ended questions and answers. The themes were metacognition, influencing, activity, and goal orientation and the goal was to find out in which ways these central aspects of autonomy were experienced by the participants. The questionnaire included a background information section and four main sections for closed statements and open-ended questions. Altogether there were 36 questions, two of which were background information, four open-ended, and the rest 30 were Likert-scale statements. To begin with, I asked the students to choose which grade they were currently in. Then the students continued by choosing their gender. I had given three options for gender: male, female, and other. The survey was built in a way that the main sections included statements, and in the end of each section there was an open-ended question for further elaboration.

The first section focused on the experiences of different aspects of autonomy regarding English learning in general, the second concentrated on the experiences of autonomy in the English classroom, the third section focused on the teacher's role in supporting autonomy, and the fourth section combined both the students' own experiences on autonomy in their free time and the role of the teacher in supporting the use of English in their free time. The Likert-scale in close-ended statements was a scale from 1 to 6, and in the middle, there was no alternative for "neutral", "undecided" or "neither agree nor disagree" since I wanted the respondents to consider how they position themselves in relation to the statements.

3.4. Methods of analysis

The survey was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively, emphasizing qualitative content analysis. The type of content analysis that was used in the present study was directed content analysis, and the questionnaire was based on the background literature. The difference in directed content analysis and conventional content analysis is that in the conventional analysis the theoretical concepts are based on the data and what emerges from the results, whereas with the directed approach, the theoretical concepts are given ready as something already known (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018:133). One of the main objectives of directed content analysis can be further validating or extending already an existing theory, theoretical concepts, or framework (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). In the questionnaire of this study, the questions were grouped under four categories each representing an important aspect of autonomy, namely, metacognition, activity, goal orientation, and influencing. These aspects also formed the overall categories of the content analysis.

In addition to utilizing directed content analysis with predetermined categories, data driven analysis and categorization were used to identify the key experiences related to each main category. As Braun and Clarke (2006) state, thematic analysis focuses on identifying, analyzing, and then reporting themes or patterns. Moreover, the core idea is to find repetition of certain

patterns (Braun and Clarke 2006). Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010:84) clarify that analyzing and processing open-ended questions can often be analyzed using content analysis. Therefore, the open-ended questions were analyzed by recognizing repetitive patterns in the answers and then categorizing them. As Fossey et al. (2002:729) discuss, thematic analysis requires the development of different categories, and the categories should be based on the data itself rather than existing theory. However, in this study, the existing theory guided the analysis, but the open-ended questions were still categorized based on the responses. The literature was used to deepen the analysis of the categorized answers to find connections or discrepancies compared to the literature. Each open-ended question is included in the analysis.

The directed content analysis was also used in analyzing the closed-ended questions as the literature had affected the questionnaire and therefore, the themes in the analysis. The existing literature was used in the analysis to discuss the observations made from the closed-ended questions, to find supportive or non-supportive connections. The quantitative analysis was seen in the form of descriptive content analysis with the closed-ended statements in the present study. Descriptive content analysis means that analysis is done by using descriptive statistics that are percentages and frequencies (Dinçer 2018). Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010:97) explain that descriptive statistics offer a clean way of introducing the data, however, it does not allow drawing any general conclusions. The present study did not include statistical analysis or comparisons. The most suitable closed-ended statements in each theme were presented in tables and the results summarized in the tables were presented through the descriptive content analysis. The analysis consists of the core themes that answer to the research questions and since the questionnaire had a great number of statements, not every statement was included in the analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will present and discuss the results of the present study. The analysis is structured into four sections that each reports the findings with regard to one aspect of autonomy. In the end of each theme, the relevant research questions are answered from the point of view of this particular theme. Moreover, a summary of the results and answers to the research questions is added in the conclusion. The themes of the analysis are goal orientation, influencing, metacognition, and activity. Through these themes, the analysis focuses on the role and experience of autonomy from the perspective of teenaged learners. Overall, the results showed that the participants seemed to possess relatively high levels of autonomy in different areas (classroom work, general consciousness of factors related to autonomy, language use in free time) however, the support of the teacher regarding the use of English during students' free time varied and was estimated lower. The themes and an overview of the structure of the analysis is included in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Overview of the thematic structure of the analysis

The experiences of autonomy in learning English from a teenager's perspective	Goal orientation	Awareness of the learning objectives related to English in general	Awareness of the learning objectives of the English classes	Setting personal learning objectives in general and in English classes	Experience of teacher support for the set learning objectives
	Influencing	Influencing classroom working during class, choosing materials, and freedom of expression	Influencing own learning through own activity	Influencing own learning through school-oriented activity	Influencing the English classes through own activity or behavior
	Metacognition	Awareness of own weaknesses and strengths in language learning	Awareness of suitable learning methods	Experience of assessment of own learning in general and in classes	Experience of teacher support for metacognitive features and skills
	Activity	Individual experience of using English in free time	The concrete ways of using English in the free time	Teacher support for the motivation, explaining the usefulness of language, and the role of activity	Teacher support for the free time use of English and informal learning

4.1. Goal orientation

Firstly, the participants' experiences of autonomy were investigated from the perspective of goal orientation. Goal orientation is closely associated with autonomy as setting objectives is essential in developing autonomy and also promoting the learner's own control over learning (Benson 2013; Alvarez Ayure 2018). As Benson (2013) notes, the learners cannot, however, be left without scaffolding; rather, the goal setting process needs support from the teachers as well. Moreover, scaffolding can support learners' goal orientation, therefore, promotes learner autonomy (Benson 2013; Kohonen 2006).

The participants answered to four separate statements regarding the awareness of the learning objectives of English in general, setting own learning objectives regarding English learning, being aware of the English learning objectives in classes, and setting own learning objectives during English classes. The results are summarized in table 2 and statement number is included in the parenthesis.

Table 2: Responses to the statements regarding learning objectives in general and in English classes

Frequency	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Nearly always	Always	Total
Statement							
I know the learning objectives regarding English learning (3)	0 (0 %)	1 (1 %)	8 (9 %)	18 (21 %)	42 (50 %)	16 (19 %)	N=85 (100 %)
I set learning objectives for myself regarding English learning (4)	2 (2 %)	5 (6 %)	17 (20 %)	21 (25 %)	28 (33 %)	12 (14 %)	N=85 (100 %)
I know the learning objectives of English in classes (9)	1 (1 %)	1 (1 %)	8 (9 %)	27 (32 %)	37 (44 %)	11 (13 %)	N=85 (100 %)
I set learning objectives for myself in English classes (10)	3 (4 %)	8 (9 %)	25 (30 %)	19 (23 %)	23 (27 %)	6 (7 %)	N=84 (100 %)

The respondents seemed to be highly aware of the objectives of learning English generally, as 50% answered that they are nearly always aware of the general learning objectives, 21% were

often aware, and 19% always aware. With regard to the smaller percentages, 9% answered sometimes, 1% rarely, and no one had answered never. According to the respondents, setting learning objectives regarding their English learning occurred relatively often since 20% answered that they sometimes set goals, 25% often, and 33% nearly always. Furthermore, with regard to the extreme ends and smaller numbers, only 2% answered that they never set any objectives, 6% rarely, and then 14% always set learning goals. As can be seen from the table, there is relatively high awareness of the learning objectives in English classes as 32% of the students answered that they are often aware of the objectives in class, whereas 44% answered that they are nearly always aware of the goals in English classes. On the other end of the scale smaller percentages were reported as 1% answered never, 1% rarely, and 9% sometimes being aware of the learning objectives in classes. Contrary to the high awareness of the objectives set in classes, the results show that 30% of the students sometimes set goals during classes, 23% often, and 27% nearly always. With regard to the smaller percentages, 9% reported rarely setting goals during classes, 7% always, and 4% never. In other words, most of the students answered setting objectives, however, there was more deviation in terms of the frequency.

The overall consciousness of the general learning objectives of English and objectives in English classes was high. However, the results do not follow each other systematically as setting personal learning objectives in English classes did not occur as often compared to setting own learning objectives in general regarding English learning. As mentioned by Lamb (2011), Benson (2013), and Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2022), individual differences and the subjectivity of the experience of autonomy affect individual responses. Furthermore, as Alvarez Ayure et al. (2018) discuss, practicing goal setting is beneficial for developing autonomy, however, practicing goal setting might not still increase individual autonomy. Therefore, even if the participants were highly aware of the learning objectives, the awareness itself did not necessarily lead to as autonomous action as the participants did not set their own class-based objectives. The lower activity in setting class-based learning objective might be explained by the subjectivity of autonomy and also by the notion of proactive or reactive autonomy (Littlewood 1999). Proactive autonomy enables the learners to determine the objectives regarding their own learning themselves, whereas reactive autonomy enables learners to function autonomously, however, it requires a direction or guidance that is given for the learners (Littlewood 1999:75).

Moreover, in terms of proactive and reactive autonomy (Littlewood 1999), the results could indicate that the students experienced proactive autonomy as they were highly aware of the objectives of English learning and English classes. This could mean that the students were able to determine the learning objectives and regulate the direction of activity, which supports the definition of proactive autonomy (Littlewood 1999). However, the results showed that the students did not set their own learning objectives so often despite the high awareness. Therefore, reactive autonomy might appear stronger in setting the personal learning objectives in classes or in general since it may require guidance from the teacher. By giving students a direction of setting the objectives rather than letting students themselves to take complete charge of it, promotes more reactive autonomy than proactive. Also, teachers are guided by their own conceptions of autonomy (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012), and they work between institutional, social,

and ideological constraints (Benson 2013; Wang 2017). Therefore, the promotion of proactive and reactive autonomy may require balancing between the two due to the contradiction of what constitutes as real freedom that can be given for the learners and how institutional and curricular constraints affect the support and promotion of autonomy in the classroom.

In order to establish the role of the teacher in supporting the respondents' personal goal setting, the students answered to a statement "Teacher supports me in achieving the goals I have set" regarding their experience on the support received from the teacher. According to the results, the students perceived the teacher's support relatively high as 41% answered that they agree with the statement, 35% partly agreed, and 17% fully agreed. Interestingly, 5% fully disagreed and 2% partly disagreed, and no one answered to the disagree-option. Therefore, it can be said that the students experienced relatively high levels of support as most answers were positively agreeing with the statement given.

The first research question was considering the students' experiences of autonomy in their EFL learning and in relation to this section's theme, goal orientation, the results indicated a high awareness of goal orientation in terms of general and classroom learning objectives of English. However, as was explained in the analysis before, the role of reactive autonomy (Littlewood 1999) which requires support and direction given to the learners instead of the learners being completely independently in charge of their own learning (proactive autonomy) could explain the results of lower autonomous action in setting the learning objectives. In other words, the experience of awareness regarding goal orientation was strong in the results, yet awareness itself did not lead to as active action in setting the objectives for oneself. The second research question was interested in the role of the teacher in supporting autonomy during EFL classes. The students experienced that the teachers support their own goal setting since 41% agreed, 35% partly agreed, and 17% fully agreed with the statement.

4.2. Influencing

The participants' experiences on autonomy were looked from the point of view of influencing their own language learning. Benson (2013) states that giving learners some possibilities to make decisions regarding their own learning might be beneficial for learner autonomy. Moreover, the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) states that it is important to include students' own interests in learning and to increase personal relevance (Benson and Huang 2013) and motivation (Ushioda 2011), thus affecting learner autonomy and self-directed action. Influencing as a theme was repeated in the close-ended statements regarding the experiences of the possibilities to influence English lessons and the freedom to express oneself during classes. Moreover, the participants were asked to describe the ways in which they can influence their own English learning in an open-ended question (statement eight). In addition, the students answered to another open-ended question (statement sixteen) in which they described how they can influence what happens in their classes.

The participants answered to statements which were regarding the role of influencing English lessons and the freedom to express oneself. The statements were related to the possibilities to influence the English class itself and how it proceeds, to the possibilities to choose materials in English classes, and to the experience of freely expressing oneself during English classes. The answers to the statements are summarized in table 3.

Table 3: Responses to the statements regarding the possibilities to influence English lessons

Frequency Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Nearly always	Always	Total
I can influence the English classes (12)	2 (2 %)	10 (12 %)	36 (43 %)	17 (20 %)	15 (18 %)	4 (5 %)	N=84 (100 %)
I have the possibility to choose materials in English classes (13)	3 (3 %)	10 (12 %)	36 (42 %)	22 (26 %)	9 (11 %)	5 (6 %)	N=85 (100 %)
I can freely express myself in English classes (15)	3 (4 %)	3 (4 %)	13 (15 %)	28 (33 %)	18 (21 %)	20 (23 %)	N=85 (100 %)

To begin with the closed-ended statements about influencing, it can be seen from Table 3 that the experiences of influencing the EFL classes occur on a more irregular basis. The answers to the statement regarding the possibility to influence the class and how it proceeds varied, yet the largest percentage, 43%, was sometimes and 20% answered that they often can influence the class. Moreover, 15% experienced that they nearly always can influence the class, 12% answered rarely and with regard to the extreme ends, only 2% answered that they never can influence the class whereas 5% answered that they always can influence the class. In statement thirteen, the students answered how much they agree with the statement “I’m allowed to choose materials in English classes”. Again, the largest number of answers was located on “sometimes” in the scale as 42% answered that they sometimes can choose materials during classes, and 26% answered that they can often choose materials, these being the largest percentages. Otherwise, 12% answered that they rarely can choose materials, 11% nearly always and 6% answered that they can always choose materials and 3% answered that they can never choose any materials.

Another statement related to influencing is number fifteen, the freedom to express oneself openly during the classes. The answers yielded positive results as 33% answered that they often

can express themselves, 21% nearly always and 23% always. In the other end of the scale the numbers were relatively small as 4% answered that they never or rarely can express themselves freely and 15% answered to sometimes being able to express themselves freely. However, it must be noted that the students were not specifically told or guided about the nature of expression, and therefore the statement can also be interpreted with regard to negative feelings, for example not being able to express oneself freely since negative behavior or disturbing the class is not allowed or the teacher controls the expression of an individual. Overall, the results indicate that in this study, the atmosphere in the classrooms was allowing the students to express themselves quite freely. On the basis of these results, we can state that the experience of being able to concretely influence the classes by choosing materials and influencing the class is lower than the experience of being able to express oneself.

This could be related to the institutional and curricular demands that teachers face in their daily work. The teacher role should be more of a facilitator to promote learner autonomy (Benson 2013; Wang 2017), teachers cannot let the pupils choose the contents of the lessons freely which affects the possibilities for influencing available students. Moreover, due to the institutional context, there are restraints to what extent the learners can be given complete freedom (Wang 2017). Yet, according to the results, the students are given the experiences of influencing but within limitations in relation to frequency. Considering students' interests while choosing learning materials is supported by the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education as well (2014). As Benson (2013) explains, in classroom-based approaches in supporting autonomy it might be efficient to allow learners to make some choices in the activities. Therefore, it can be seen from the results that the students had some power to make choices. Kohonen (2006) argues that it is not possible for students or teachers to declare only unilateral declaration of independence as the roles are complementary and both are required. Rather, the results could indicate that influencing is done collaboratively in the limits of the external constraints (Benson 2013) that affect the level of autonomy promotion in classrooms.

In the open-ended answers that asked the students how they can influence their own English learning, two themes were detected which were own personal activity and school-oriented activity. Own personal activity included answers that referred to talking and using English, free time studying via different resources, and also taking more responsibility with active language use. The school-oriented activities referred to using different learning techniques, concentrating more on studying, and putting more effort to learning. However, these two main themes overlapped with each other. The examples below (see original Finnish examples in Appendix 2) show how the participants described the ways in which they can influence their own learning using free time resources:

- (1) "I can practice English outside school. I can also practice English using the best way for me which is just speaking it."

- (2) “By reading or watching English movies and by somehow attaching English more to my life as it is. Also, a good night’s sleep and a willingness to learn help with the matter, for example.”
- (3) “Watching, reading, gaming and listening to English shows, movies, games and books, for example YouTube / Netflix. I have watched a lot of shows and played videogames and those have been really great for learning!”

As can be seen from the examples, the answers indicate that the participants could name several methods and resources that they use in their free time to actively practice and learn English, and the role of these resources is recognized in developing language skills. As brought up by Benson (2013), in relation to resource-based approach to autonomy, different resources and digital technologies enable learning outside classroom in multiple settings outside school in today’s world (Honarзад and Rassaei 2019). As is seen in example 1, learning outside school is seen as a method to promote learning. Overall, the most common answers related to free time activities were watching films, using streaming services, gaming, listening to music, speaking English in free time, videos, reading and social media. In addition, the examples include a strong reference to English being a part of the participants’ life and the different resources are likeable as they are closely connected to everyday activities outside school, therefore promoting informal learning.

Moreover, as is seen in example 2, some participants expressed their will to connect English to their daily lives to promote one’s own learning further as one of the participants had written that it by “connecting English more to my life somehow” it is possible to influence one’s learning. The role of own activity and taking responsibility in language learning is also seen in example 2 as the importance of sleep and willingness to learn are named as tools to influence learning. These examples illustrate that naming the concrete resources of influencing one’s own learning were versatile and the participants could name their own preferred resources. The results support the importance of personal relevance (Benson and Huang 2013) and personal interest (Ushioda 2011) that enable autonomous learning. Moreover, in line with Benson’s (2013) notes on technology-based approaches, the results support the three autonomy supportive points that technology enables in language learning: placing the learner in control, access to authentic target language sources, and interactive use of language. The emphasis in the answers was on using the language in free time and maintaining it as a part of life and being in control of the learning that occurs during free time.

The responses that were categorized as school-oriented brought to the fore school activity that can be used to influence language learning. The most often named methods in the answers were familiar techniques that are used at school, for example reading, writing, listening, and completing tasks during lessons. However, those techniques were also utilized in free time activities, as the examples 1, 2, and 3 demonstrate. In addition to naming learning techniques, a school-oriented theme was related to own behavior and taking responsibility over own behavior. School-oriented behavior was named through using verbs such as preparing for exams,

listening more during classes, studying, practicing, and focusing more on studying and learning. The examples below illustrate how this theme was seen in the answers:

- (4) “I do a more work at home and read better for exams. I focus more on my studying. I do a little extra.”
- (5) “By doing everything with care and listening during classes.”
- (6) “By focusing more on own exercises than any other things.”

As is seen in the above examples, the methods that are named as ways to influence learning are emphasizing learner behavior and taking more responsibility. The examples emphasize taking more control and responsibility over learning. The learner is responsible for the control of how, when, and where learning occurs (Benson and Huang 2013) as in each example the participants have described how to place themselves more in control by describing forms of activities as ways to influence their learning. However, in these examples the control and possibility to influence lies on the school-oriented performances rather than having more control of different learning resources as in the previous examples described above. In the examples 4, 5, and 6, the emphasis is on putting more effort to studying both at home and in school as in the example 4, the participant had described that influence is possible by “doing more at home and preparing for exams better” and “doing a little extra work”. Examples 5 and 6 refer to school and classroom-oriented contexts to influence learning as “listening during classes” and “focusing more on own exercises than any other things” are mentioned. Due to the subjectivity of autonomy the students experience it differently, however, these examples illustrate that influencing one’s own learning is possible by altering own behavior and activities in a manner that aims at performing well at school.

Answers to the open-ended question about the ways of influencing the English classes were divided into two main themes: influencing through own self-initiated activity in classroom or influencing the class through own behavior. In the answers, self-initiated activity was described in terms of suggesting or asking the teacher of different activities, ideas, opinions, or exercises. Moreover, participants also mentioned asking the teacher’s permission for changing the study location to a more suitable one, for example working in the hallway. The most common noun that occurred together with suggesting in the answers was exercises, whether it was suggesting the completion of exercises of different skill levels, suggesting having alternatives in the exercises or suggesting to complete exercise in small groups or alone. The examples below illustrate the self-initiated activity through suggestion and asking.

- (7) “By suggesting different exercises for the teacher.”
- (8) “For example, I can ask the teacher if I can do exercises differently than it is told in the book or notebook. And I can ask if I can go and do English exercises quietly in the hallway.”

- (9) “By suggesting the teacher what we could do in the classes so that we would not have similar classes every time.”

In the above examples 7, 8, and 9 the participants describe influencing their classes in terms of suggesting different exercises (example 7), asking to do some exercise differently, and suggesting different ideas to the teachers so that the lessons would not always be similar (example 9). In the classroom context, Littlewood’s (1999) definition of reactive autonomy matches with the students’ answers as the learners require stimulus and direction to be given to enable autonomous learning. Therefore, influencing the lessons is possible through self-directed action but teacher’s final acceptance and direction for the continuance of the lesson is needed. Legault (2018) notes that the contexts which allow learners to be self-direct are also supporting learner autonomy. In the school context, the extent to which learners can contribute to lessons is limited due to institutional and curricular factors. Moreover, if the classes rely heavily on teacher-led teaching, it can further limit the students’ control over their learning and thus limit autonomous action. Therefore, the control shift from teachers to learners (Wang 2017) might be limited. As Ushioda (2011) notes, those classroom practices that support autonomy allow learners to express themselves to but also are open for negotiation regarding own learning. In the above examples the participants had the possibility of negotiation with the teacher to influence their learning and also had the freedom to express their ideas.

The examples that were categorized influencing the class through own behavior included behaving in a manner that does not bother others, staying calm and giving others peaceful learning conditions, locating oneself in a place that is peaceful, listening to instructions, staying silent, focusing on classroom work, and following the rules. These answers indicate that the students had experienced that they could influence the English classes by regulating their own behavior to guarantee learning for others or for themselves. The examples below demonstrate the behavior-oriented answers:

- (10) “I give others peaceful learning conditions and behave well.”
- (11) “By behaving in a calm manner one can maintain the class more peaceful, then studying is easier for everyone.”
- (12) “By doing and focusing on the given exercises and giving others peaceful learning conditions and by asking help if it is needed.”

In the examples 10, 11, and 12 the participants had answered that by “giving others peaceful learning conditions and being nicely” (10), “by behaving in a calm manner one can maintain the class more peaceful” (11), and “focusing on the given exercises and giving others peaceful learning conditions” (12) one can influence the English classes. However, learner behavior in the classroom may also be affected by classroom practices if those do not support learner autonomy. According to Ushioda (2011), those practices that do not promote autonomy in classrooms may affect learners’ behavior to be more controlled in relation to their own self-

expression as language users. Schools and teachers are guided by curricular and institutional guidelines on desirable behavior and those affect how teachers control or manage learners' behavior during classes and therefore, the students' experiences of influencing the class may be affected by teachers' control of the learner behavior. Wang (2017) discusses the notion of control shift and its effect on the consequences. Due to the external constraints, the control shift requires balancing since learners have consequences for their actions. Relationship of autonomy and learning environments is also always socially constructed and dynamic (Lamb 2017) which explains the differences in the answers and experiences even in the same classroom environment. This could further explain the complex relationship of the physical learning environment and how this affects learner autonomy when it is discussed from the English classes' point of view as there are more constraints to autonomous action.

To answer the research questions from this section's point of view, the first research question focused on students' experiences of autonomy in their EFL learning and the results indicate varying experiences. In the closed-ended statements regarding students' experiences on influencing the EFL classes by choosing materials, affecting the class and how it proceeds, and the freedom to express oneself the answers revealed that the participants most often felt they sometimes had the possibility to influence the class and materials but often had the freedom to express themselves openly. Moreover, in the two open-ended questions that asked how the students can influence their English learning in general and how they can influence their English classes the answers indicated a division between self-initiated activity and school-oriented activity regarding own action and behavior. The answers to the first open-ended questions regarding influencing English learning in general showed that the participants influenced learning using English via free time resources, mostly enabled by technology (games, music, tv-series, reading, videos, movies etc.) and English occurred as a part of their everyday life. The school-oriented category focused more on classes, listening more carefully to the teacher, and doing extra work for exams and putting more effort on the learning process and performance at school. The second open-ended question that focused on influencing the English classes were also divided into two main themes that were influencing through self-initiated activity and influencing through behavior. In the self-initiated activities, the role of suggesting activities or alternative ways of working to the teacher was the main method of influencing, however, it was seen that teacher acceptance was still necessary. The behavior-oriented answers indicated more strict control of one's behavior during class and therefore giving others peaceful learning conditions. The difference between the open-ended questions could be explained by the classroom-context and how it affects the experience of autonomy as the physical space of the classroom may cause a different experience of autonomy and control.

To answer the fourth research question that aimed to find out the role of autonomy during students' free time English learning, it could be seen from the answers to the open-ended question about influencing English learning in general that the participants utilized and exploited various resources during their free time. The result indicates high awareness of using resources to promote learning informally. In addition to the free time resources, the participants who considered that they can influence their English learning by doing extra work, putting more

effort to studying and preparing for exams, home was mentioned as a place to complete these activities. Therefore, the results indicated autonomous behavior with regard to taking control of the learning process or affecting the school performance outside school. As Kohonen (2006) notes, students themselves are a prominent resource for their own learning and by taking charge of their own learning they develop their autonomy as students, but also as language users. Thus, as students utilize free time resources and take more charge of their learning, they develop autonomy in relation to language using. This was seen in the open-ended answers as students could name several ways of using the language and not merely studying it.

4.3. Metacognition

The students' experiences on autonomy were also looked from the perspective of metacognition which was chosen as one key theme. Statements related to assessment and awareness, were categorized under the theme of metacognition. Benson (2013) describes that in curriculum-based approaches the emphasis should be on raising awareness of different learning strategies. Also, self-assessment has useful qualities for learner autonomy (Benson 2013). Self-assessment may assist learners to become more aware of their goals, learning processes, and expectations (Butler and Lee 2010). Thus, awareness of learning strategies and self-assessment can enhance learners' metacognition as they gain more awareness of their own learning processes. The experience of teacher support is also included as the participants answered to statements regarding teacher allowing self-assessment, choosing suitable learning methods, teacher giving multiple choices of exercises, and allowing working alone or in groups. In addition, an open-ended question regarding teacher support is included in the analysis. According to Alvarez Ayure et al. (2018), when students learn to monitor their own learning, it might lead to achieving higher degree of autonomy. Moreover, Benson and Huang (2013) discuss ability as one dimension belonging to autonomy as it refers to learners' skills and knowledge, therefore supporting the metacognitive skills of students.

The participants answered to statements regarding their own awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in language learning, self-assessment of language learning in general, self-assessment in English classes, and awareness of the suitable learning methods in classes. The answers to the statements regarding the participants' metacognition are summarized in table 4.

Table 4: Responses to the statements regarding students' metacognitive activities: awareness, assessment, and working methods

Frequency	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Nearly always	Always	Total
Statement							

I am aware of my own strengths and weaknesses in language learning (5)	2 (2 %)	0 (0 %)	8 (9 %)	20 (24 %)	34 (40 %)	21 (25 %)	N=85 (100 %)
I can assess my own learning (6)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)	11 (13 %)	27 (32 %)	28 (33 %)	19 (22 %)	N=85 (100 %)
I know the most suitable working methods for myself in English classes (11)	1 (1 %)	0 (0 %)	12 (14 %)	20 (24 %)	32 (38 %)	19 (23 %)	N=84 (100 %)
I can assess my own learning in English classes (14)	0 (0 %)	1 (1 %)	12 (14 %)	30 (35 %)	32 (38 %)	10 (12 %)	N=85 (100 %)

As is seen from table 4, a general observation is that all the answers with the largest percentage are placed on “nearly always” on the frequency scale which itself indicates high metacognitive action. The answers to the statement regarding the awareness of strengths and weaknesses, 40% of the participants had answered that they are nearly always aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, 24% answered that they often are aware and 25% always aware of their strengths and weaknesses and regarding the smaller percentages, 2% answered never being aware and 9% sometimes being aware of strengths and weaknesses. Not one had answered that they rarely are aware of strengths and weaknesses. The statement regarding assessment of own learning had answers beginning from “sometimes” as 13% answered they sometimes can assess their own learning, 32% often, 33% nearly always, and 22% always whereas no one chose the alternatives never and rarely. The students also had relatively high awareness of suitable learning methods as 38% answered that they nearly always know suitable learning methods in English classes, 24% often knew and 23% always knew suitable methods. Regarding the lower percentages, 1% answered that they never know suitable methods, and 14% replied sometimes knowing appropriate methods whereas no one answered that they rarely know learning methods. The last statement in table 4 was related to self-assessment in English classes and 38% answered that they nearly always can assess their own learning in EFL classes 35% reported often being able to assess their own learning. The smaller percentages were in the extreme ends as 1% answered that they rarely can assess their own learning whereas 12% always can assess their learning. No one answered that they never can assess their learning and 14% answered that they sometimes can assess their learning.

The results demonstrate relatively high metacognition in relation to autonomous action and students’ ability and knowledge of their own learning. Also, the answers indicate that students perceived themselves to have reached the skills mentioned in National Core Curriculum. The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) notes that learners should be able to set

own learning goals, and moreover, should be conscious of their own learning processes which in turn assists students to operate more self-directedly (POPS 2014:17). Benson (2013) explains that in curriculum-based approaches students are expected to develop a capacity to take control over learning by practicing activities that further assist promotion of autonomy. Autonomy can be promoted in the classroom also by practicing self-management skills and control over cognitive perspectives (Benson 2013). Therefore, the results are also in line with these perspectives since most of the participants had relatively clear control over metacognitive dimensions of learning. This supports the idea that for the participants of this study, the role of an active and autonomous learner is promoted in the classrooms and students have developed their metacognitive skills as learners.

Even if the results show that the participants were aware of suitable learning methods, could assess their own learning, and were aware of their strengths and weaknesses in language learning, it does not necessarily mean that all had the desire for fulfilling the activities. Desire refers to the learner’s intention for carrying out a specific task (Benson and Huang 2013). To what extent learners conducted self-assessment or practiced using different learning methods was not researched in this study as the focus was on the experience. However, the smaller percentages with each statement being on the other end of the scale, from never to sometimes, it could be said that the participants were familiar with self-assessing.

The students also reacted to statements regarding the role of teacher in supporting the participants metacognition. The students answered to the following statements: “the teacher allows me to choose the most suitable working methods for myself”, “the teacher gives me multiple exercise options”, “the teacher allows me to assess my own learning”, and “the teacher allows me to decide whether I work alone or in groups”. The answers are summarized in the table 5.

Table 5: Responses to the statements regarding teacher support for metacognitive activities: working methods and assessment

Agreement Statement	Com-pletely dis-agree	Disagree	Partly disagree	Partly agree	Agree	Com-pletely agree	Total
The teacher allows me to choose the most suitable working methods for myself (17)	1 (1 %)	3 (4 %)	3 (4 %)	33 (40 %)	32 (39 %)	10 (12 %)	N=82 (100 %)
The teacher gives me multiple exercise options (19)	2 (2 %)	5 (6 %)	10 (12 %)	33 (39 %)	31 (36 %)	4 (5 %)	N=85 (100 %)

The teacher allows me to assess my own learning (21)	1 (1 %)	0 (0 %)	3 (4 %)	24 (28 %)	37 (44 %)	19 (23 %)	N=84 (100 %)
The teacher allows me to decide whether I work alone or in groups (22)	5 (6 %)	3 (3 %)	15 (18 %)	36 (42 %)	22 (26 %)	4 (5 %)	N= 85 (100 %)

Overview of the percentages reveals that the participants had experienced teacher support to be something that they partly agree or agree with. The answers to the statement concerning teacher allowing suitable methods were overall leaning towards positive experiences as 40% answered to partly agreeing with the statement, 39% agreeing, and 12% completely agreeing. In the other end of the scale, 1% answered that they completely disagreed, 4% disagreed, and 4% partly disagreed with the statement. The statement regarding the teacher giving multiple choices in exercises had similar answers as the previous one since 39% answered that they partly agree, 36% agreed but this time 12% partly disagreed compared to the 4% completely agreeing. In the other end of the scale, 2% completely disagreed and 6% disagreed. As can be seen from the answers to the statement regarding the teacher allowing the participants to assess their own learning, 44% of the students agreed with the statement, 28% partly agreed and 23% completely agreed which indicates that assessment was experienced well supported by the teacher. Only 1% completely disagreed and 4% partly disagreed, and no one disagreed. The last statement regarding teacher support to the students' working methods was related to allowing students to work alone or in groups and 42% partly agreed with the statement, 26% agreed and 4% completely agreed. However, this time the answers indicated a slight difference compared to the previous ones as 18% partly disagreed with the statement. Respectively, 6% completely disagreed and 3% disagreed.

Again, the results regarding teacher support were positively assessed by most participants and are in line with the students' own experiences seen in table 4. However, as the general results were placed on "nearly always" and "often" in table 4, indicating a high metacognitive awareness and knowledge, teacher support received lower results, and this was the statement regarding self-assessment. Benson (2013) notes that if students are only taught about learning strategies and do not consider those helpful in their knowledge constructing process in relation to language learning, learners may not develop their autonomy. In the results from both tables 4 and 5 the students' high awareness of the learning methods, the students reported partly agreeing with teacher support for allowing the use of different learning methods. However, it is also noted that in table 4 that most of the participants did not always know the best methods which in turn could mean that the participants require scaffolding and support (Benson 2013) at least in some situations, even if the percentages were high. As can be seen from both tables, the

results indicate that the participants had the opportunities to practice using learning methods, and teachers allowed using various learning methods during classes.

In addition, the participants had experienced that the teacher allowed different exercise options and allowed to choose to work in groups or alone. Legault (2018) explains that individuals who select goals, activities and actions which support their own needs are more self-congruent. Moreover, in classroom environments that allow making choices students can experience learning personally relevant (Benson and Huang 2013). The results show that the participants had these affordances that benefited their own metacognition and personal relevance for learning. The students in this study had possibilities to make choices and decisions and they also explored different methods regarding their own language learning, thus, these being classroom practices that promote autonomy (Ushioda 2011). However, as mentioned in the previous sections, the teachers face limitations, restrictions, and obligations which may limit the degree of learner control. Benson (2013) notes that external tests and curricular guidelines affect self-assessment, for example. Yet, in both tables 4 and 5, the role of self-assessment was experienced positively both individually and supported by the teacher.

Despite most of the participants partly agreed or agreed with teacher support in learning methods, working methods, and self-assessment, the answers to the open-ended question regarding the nature of teacher support turned out to be challenging compared to other three open-ended questions in the survey. The most frequent answers were related to teacher helping the learner, giving exercises that match the students' own proficiency level, motivating, cheering, giving advice in completing exercises, explaining, and teaching thoroughly challenging topics. In addition, a few students named that teacher's evaluation of their learning and private discussions are supportive. However, a few participants answered that they do not know how their teacher supports their English learning, or it was said to be difficult to name any concrete ways of teacher support. The difficulty of this question could lie in the participants' age and individual differences since some of them answered in detail and then for some the question was experienced difficult. The below examples demonstrate the experiences of teacher support in the students' answers:

- (13) "If I encounter a problem that I can't solve then he/she tries to help me in solving it."
- (14) "By motivating and complimenting on strengths. By honestly discussing where to improve."
- (15) "He / She gives hints on how to do exercises and what kind goals I should set for myself. And the teacher encourages to keep up the good work."

As the examples 13, 14, and 15 demonstrate, teacher's role is described in versatile ways, yet the emphasis in the examples is on helping, motivating, and assisting the learning. Thus, in the answers that teacher functions more as the facilitator and guide in interaction with the students. Chateau and Tassinari (2021) argue that teachers should be prepared to support pupils'

autonomy pedagogically, methodologically, technically, and personally. Helping and giving advice were often mentioned in the answers as the teachers' roles. Yet, teaching English merely as linguistic content was not mentioned by the students. In example 13, the participant had described that "if I encounter a problem that I cannot solve then she/he tries to help me in solving it", indicating autonomous approach. The student approach to problems is to solve them independently and if that is not possible, then teacher support is needed. Moreover, teacher is still a vital source for students' learning but as Kohonen (2006) points out, delegating educational power to the students requires that teachers assist learners in accepting the role of an active participant.

Moreover, as seen in example 15, teacher giving advice on exercises and explaining how they are done is more likely to promote autonomy. Intraboonsom et al. (2020) explain that teachers who explain how and why, in addition to what, is done in the classroom, can promote learner autonomy. Giving advice and explaining were named to be supportive measures for the participants. This further supports that in this study, some students experienced support through explanations (why) and demonstrations (how) (Intraboonsom et al. 2020). The answers support Benson's (2013:185) notion of teachers functioning in various frameworks of facilitator, helpers, counsellors, advisers, and resources, for example. In example 14 the participant had described that teacher supports by "honestly telling me where I can improve" and in example 15 "what kind of goals I should set for myself" and "teacher encourages me to keep up the good work". The examples indicate that the language advising in this study was linked to learning methodology rather than mere linguistic content (Benson 2013). This may promote learners' awareness of their own learning process and thus promote metacognitive skills and autonomy.

To answer the first research question in relation to the participants' metacognition, the answers to the closed-ended statements were indicating high awareness of their metacognitive activities. It was seen that the students experienced that they mostly were aware of the suitable learning methods in English classes, could perform self-assessment in general and in English lessons, and were aware of their strengths and weaknesses in language learning. Self-assessment and awareness of different learning strategies have useful qualities for learner autonomy (Benson 2013). The overall positive results also are in line with the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) as according to the curriculum, learners should be aware of their learning processes. The students in this study had promoted their metacognitive skills and had the opportunities to explore different learning methods and self-assessment.

The second research question focused on teacher support, and the teacher support for the participants' metacognitive skills was experienced rather positively. Teacher support was in line with the students' own experiences, especially the role of self-assessment was positively experienced individually. Self-assessment was also supported by the teacher. According to the results, the teachers allowed students to explore different methods and exercise types, however, as noted in the analysis, the degree to what extent teachers can grant freedom for learners is likely to be limited due to external obligations. The answers to the open-ended question regarding teacher support were mainly focused on teacher giving advice, explaining, assisting, and

motivating, highlighting the versatile role of a teacher. Instead of teacher-centered teaching of linguistic content, it was seen in terms of focusing on the students' learning process and methodological support (Benson 2013).

4.4. Activity

The last dimension of autonomy that was studied was activity. In general, the socio-constructive definitions of autonomy include activity as an essential element, as the learner is seen as an active individual in socio-cultural contexts (Lamb 2017). Also, Legault (2018) notes that autonomy includes the notion of activity, as being autonomous entails that individuals are in interaction with their environments. It also entails the feeling of monitoring one's life (Legault 2018), thus being in control (Benson and Huang 2013). However, activity and the active use of language are integral parts of autonomy. The learning process requires the desire and ability to promote learning, not mere control (Benson and Huang 2013). Moreover, in relation to the learning contexts in Finland, the view of an active learner is supported by the institutional documents that guide English learning in the Finnish context, CEFR (2020) and the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014). Moreover, teacher attention should be directed to the use of students' free time English, as it has been growing rapidly, and it should be taken into account in learning English and in designing learning materials or classes (POPS 2014). Therefore, the experience of activity was investigated from both individual and teacher support's point of view.

The role of activity from an individual's perspective was analyzed with the help of statements related to personal language use. The participants answered to statements regarding their own use of English in their free time. The statements were related to the experiences of English as a part of life: using English actively in free time, being supported to discuss free time language use at school, and easily finding ways to use the language in free time. The answers to the statements are summarized in table 6.

Table 6: Responses to the statements regarding the participants' experiences on the use of English in their free time

Frequency Statement	Never	Rarely	Some- times	Often	Nearly always	Always	Total
I can connect studying English things that are important to me (7)	1 (1 %)	4 (5 %)	16 (19 %)	14 (16 %)	24 (28 %)	26 (31 %)	N= 85 (100 %)

I use English actively in my free time (27)	1 (1 %)	11 (13 %)	19 (22 %)	16 (19 %)	13 (15 %)	25 (30 %)	N= 85 (100 %)
I am encouraged to discuss my free time use of English at school (32)	13 (15 %)	19 (22 %)	24 (28 %)	18 (21 %)	8 (10 %)	3 (4 %)	N= 85 (100 %)
I can easily find ways to use the language in my free time (34)	0 (0 %)	5 (6 %)	16 (19 %)	20 (24 %)	14 (16 %)	30 (35 %)	N= 85 (100 %)

An overview of the results reveals that three out of the four statements had largest percentages placed on the option always which indicates high role of activity. Therefore, it can be said that the participants saw themselves as active language users. The only statement which had the largest percentage placed on sometimes was regarding school context and support for free time use of English. The answers to the first statement, “I can connect studying English things that are important to me”, indicated high activity as 31% answered that they always can attach studying English to of their lives, and 28% nearly always. These were the largest percentages, as 19% answered sometimes, 16 % often, 5% rarely, and 1% never. Followingly, the answers to the statement “I use English actively in my free time” also had the largest percentage on always, as 30% of the participants answered actively using English in their free time. However, the second largest percentage was on sometimes (22%) whereas 19% often used English actively. Smaller percentages were then nearly always (15%), rarely (13%), and never (1%). The statement which had the lowest frequency percentages was “I am encouraged to discuss my free time use of English at school” as 28% answered that they sometimes are encouraged, 22% answered rarely, and 21% often. As can be seen, there was relatively large variation in the frequencies and with regard to the smaller percentages, only 4% reported that they are always encouraged to discuss the free time use of English, 8% answered nearly always, and in the other end, 15% answered never. The last statement, “I can easily find ways to use the language in my free time”, had the largest percentage on always, with 35% reporting that they always find ways to use the language, 24% often, 19% sometimes, and 16% nearly always. No one had answered never finding any ways to use the language, and 6% answered that they rarely easily find the ways of using English.

The responses show that the participants quite actively used English in their spare time and were accustomed to finding different ways of using the language. The answers support the idea of informal learning and free time learning being learner controlled (Trinder 2017). It can be seen that the students actively and self-directedly used English. They could attach studying it a part of everyday life and found ways to actively use the language. According to Honanrzad and Rassaei (2019), learning out-of-class is promoting and assisting the development of autonomous learning. Yu (2020) notes that the awareness of autonomous learning outside the classroom is beneficial since it helps to make learning part of everyday life. It is seen in the results

that most of students had positively frequent experiences related to their own activity and English use outside school. This further supports that the students in this study demonstrated high awareness and metacognition regarding their own learning, as was seen in the previous section of analysis (4.3). However, the only statement which had lower frequencies was related to the experiences of being encouraged to discuss free time use of English at school. This indicates that even if the students were highly active in using English, aware of different ways of using it in their free time and had recognized how to add learning English to their daily lives through meaningful topics, they were not encouraged to share their experiences as actively. The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) notes that students' interests should be considered in foreign language learning. Moreover, Trinder (2017) points out that it might be useful to create an explicit connection to informal learning to gain more validation of it, especially with younger learners. Therefore, it could be argued that it would be beneficial for learner autonomy if teachers to speak about informal learning and let students participate in the discussion to further promote their free time learning.

The participants also answered to an open-ended question in which they were asked to describe how they use English in their free time and a few examples were given in parenthesis such as music, series, and games. Majority of the answers was focusing on the aforementioned free time resources which were presented also as ways to influence one's learning (section 4.2.). Most popular ways were thus music, games, watching movies with English subtitles, watching English tv-series, social media, reading, and using spoken and written English to communicate with others. Speaking English was sometimes done with one's family members, friends, neighbors, or during online gameplay with team members or other players. Travelling and using English abroad was mentioned once. Only a few had answered not using that much English in free time and some elaborated that this is due to their lack of English skills. The below examples illustrate how the participants used English in their free time:

- (16) "I play games which require that I speak English. I also speak English with my family sometimes. I watch a lot of English shows."
- (17) "Almost all the media I consume is in English, I listen to English music and watch series often even without Finnish subtitles."
- (18) "I have not used English that much in my free time, but I have tried to use more English so that I could improve my English skills."

As is seen in the examples 16, 17, and 18, the role of English in the participants' spare time is attached to their free time activities. Therefore, it can be said that using English free time resources were relevant for their learning process, supporting Benson's (2013) notion of personal relevance. Callanan et al. (2011) discuss that meaningfulness of the resources, tools, and affordances is essential to promote the language learning. In relation to informal learning, one aspect is that informal learning includes a learner-controlled approach instead of learning being related to institutional contexts (Trinder 2017). Also in this study, examples of informal

learning that the participants gave were strictly learner controlled as the participants made the decisions regarding the used resources and in which way, to what extent, and how much time they utilized to promote their own learning. Trinder (2017) also clarifies that informal learning includes intentionality over the choices regarding language learning instead of implicitness. In example 18, the participant had described “not using English that much in my free time but I have tried to use more English so that I could improve my English skills” and in this example the participant made an intentional choice to increase the amount of English in his/her spare time activities. Therefore, even if the experience of English use in free time was not that active or the language was not used as much, increasing the use of English to improve one’s skills entails an intentional, self-directed, and an autonomous choice to enhance control over one’s learning.

The students’ experiences on activity were also looked from the perspective of teacher support, as foreign language teachers have an essential role in influencing both internal and external factors that affect learner autonomy and its development (Han 2017:134). The participants expressed their opinion regarding teacher support and motivation in English learning, teacher explaining why language learning is useful, and the support for discussing the role of own activity in language learning. The answers to the statements are summarized in table 7.

Table 7: Responses to the statements regarding the participants’ agreement on teacher support with regard to motivating students, explaining the usefulness of language, and discussing the role of own activity in language learning

Agreement Statement	Completely disagree	Disagree	Partly disagree	Partly agree	Agree	Completely agree	Total
The teacher motivates me in studying English (23)	4 (5 %)	5 (6 %)	19 (22 %)	22 (26 %)	24 (28 %)	11 (13 %)	N= 85 (100 %)
The teacher explains why language learning is useful (24)	1 (1 %)	3 (4 %)	10 (12 %)	16 (19 %)	30 (35 %)	25 (29 %)	N= 85 (100 %)
We have discussed the role of own activity in language learning (25)	4 (5 %)	2 (2 %)	15 (18 %)	23 (27 %)	35 (41 %)	6 (7 %)	N= 85 (100 %)

An overview of the answers in table 7 indicate that the participants mostly agreed with the given statement which in turn suggests a relatively high teacher support for the participants’ active use of English. The first statement was aiming to find out the role of teacher motivating

the students in studying English and 28% agreed and 26% partly agreed with the statement. Yet, 22% partly disagreed with the statement, and with regard to the smaller numbers, 13% completely agreed with the statement whereas 6% disagreed and 5% disagreed. The second statement in table 7 was “Teacher explains why language learning is useful” and 35% answered agreeing, 29% completely agreeing, and 19% partly agreeing. In the other end of the scale, 12% answered partly disagreeing, 4% disagreeing, and 1% completely disagreeing. The last statement in the table was regarding the experience of teacher explaining the role of own activity in language learning and 41% reported agreeing and 27% partly agreeing with the statement. Yet, 18% partly disagreed with the statement and 5% completely disagreed and 2% disagreed. In the extreme end, 7% completely agreed with the statement.

As has been discussed earlier in the analysis, the results in table 7 further support the notion brought up by Benson (2013), Chateau and Tassinari (2021) and (Han 2020) that teachers’ role in language teaching is versatile as it includes more than teaching linguistic content; it includes support, scaffolding, and facilitating. In the above statements, teachers functioned as motivators and guides in assisting the students’ autonomous free time learning process, as most the students had experiences of teacher support. In the above statements, the participants had relatively positive experiences regarding the teacher motivating their English learning, explaining the usefulness of language learning, and discussing the role of own activity. Moreover, compared to table 6, as the participants were mainly active users of English, it could be said that the students had expressed understanding the role of own activity and also reported having received support for that from the teacher. However, as Lamb (2011) notes, not everyone possesses similar levels of autonomy due to individual differences and the experience of support may vary. With regard to motivation, it needs to be noted that there were students who disagreed with the idea of teacher motivating them as 22% partly disagreed with the statement.

The participants answered to more statements regarding teacher support for their free time use of English and on a frequency scale. The statements were “The teacher supports me in using the language in other areas of my life (free time)”, “The teacher allows me to exploit my other know-how of English from my own life through an important topic”, “The teacher is interested in my free time English use”, and “We discuss the possibilities of using the language in free time at school”. A summary of the responses to the statements is included the table 8.

Table 8: Responses to the statements regarding teacher support for the participants’ use of English in their free time

Frequency Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Nearly always	Always	Total
The teacher supports me in using the language in	4 (5 %)	8 (10 %)	23 (27 %)	20 (24 %)	18 (21 %)	11 (13 %)	N= 84 (100 %)

other areas of my life (free time) (29)							
The teacher allows me to exploit my other know-how of English from my own life through an important topic (30)	2 (2 %)	3 (4 %)	23 (28 %)	17 (21 %)	26 (31 %)	12 (14 %)	N= 83 (100 %)
The teacher is interested in my free time English use (31)	6 (7 %)	14 (17 %)	29 (34 %)	19 (22 %)	12 (14 %)	5 (6 %)	N= 85 (100 %)
We discuss the possibilities of using the language in free time at school (33)	8 (9 %)	8 (9 %)	33 (39 %)	18 (21 %)	14 (17 %)	4 (5 %)	N= 85 (100 %)

An overview of the responses shows that the largest percentages in relation to the first, the third and the fourth statement were placed on “sometimes” on the frequency scale whereas the second statement had the most “nearly always” answers. This demonstrates a dispersion in the answers compared to the previous tables that have showed relatively high agreement or frequencies. The responses to the first statement “The teacher supports me in using the language in other areas of my life (free time)” were mostly divided between sometimes, often, and nearly. The second statement was investigating the role of teacher support “The teacher allows me to exploit my other know-how of English from my own life through an important topic” and 31% of the students had experienced that teacher allows exploiting their know-how nearly always. Yet, 28% had responded sometimes and 21% often. In the opposite ends, 14% had answered always, 4% rarely, and 2% never. The third statement in table 8 “The teacher is interested in my free time English use” had its largest percentage, 34%, on sometimes. Followingly, 22% reported having experienced teacher interest in their free time English use often, 17% rarely, and 14 % nearly always. In the extreme ends, 7% answered never and 6% always. The last statement in table 8 was “We discuss the possibilities of using the language in free time at school” and 39% of the participants had answered sometimes discussing the possibilities of English use at school. In addition, 21% reported often and 17% nearly always. In the opposite ends, both never and rarely had 9% of the answers and 5% always.

In the answers, the participants’ experiences were not as positively viewed compared to the previous sections in which the teacher support has been generally experienced relatively frequent. The experiences that had lower frequencies were regarding teacher support in using English in other areas of life, teacher showing interest towards the free time use of English and discussing at school the possibilities to use English in free time. The answers are interesting since the individual experiences of English use in free time were reported high and therefore,

as is mentioned in the National Core Curriculum (2014), the free time learning, and student interests should be taken into account in English lessons. The results indicate that the participants experienced teacher support for exploiting their knowledge or know-how of English through important topics mostly nearly always, often, and sometimes which indicates that exploiting one's knowledge is allowed in classes to some extent. Therefore, it could be noted that even if the participants have strong experiences of free time autonomous, informal, and self-directed learning, they mostly had teacher support for utilizing their knowledge at school, which is in line with the curricular suggestion of including student interests. However, the teacher support did not extend to the outside school learning in terms of showing interest or explaining the possibilities of language use in free time so often.

This could be explained with the help of the idea of the control shift (Wang 2017). Even if the traditional roles of teaching and learning may have changed so that learners have more responsibility and more control (Benson 2013) over their learning, it does not necessarily mean that all the aspects of learning are covered, especially the ones that occur outside school. However, one key role of the teacher is to function as a facilitator and guide (Benson 2013) and to offer scaffolding (Kohonen 2006) for the learners. Teachers can often face educational and institutional constraints (Wang 2017) and therefore, extending the support or scaffolding for students' informal learning can require balancing since teacher interest is easily drawn to the immediate school environment. With regard to autonomy, Intraboonsom et al. (2020) note that teachers can promote learners' psychological autonomy and life-long learning by explaining that what is learned in the classroom can be practiced outside the class as well.

With the help of these results, it is possible to answer the research questions from the perspective of activity. The first research question was related to the experiences of autonomy in EFL learning, and in general it can be said that based on the results the participants had strong individual experiences as language users and had control over their learning in free time. This result suggests that the students were autonomous as own activity is included as an essential element to autonomy and learning (Benson and Huang 2013; Legault 2018). The role of own activity was experienced positively, and the participants used various resources in their free time. The second research question was investigating the students' views on the teacher's role in supporting autonomy during their EFL classes and the results show that teacher support for motivation, explaining the usefulness of language and the role of own activity were seen rather positively. Thus, the results demonstrated a positive experience of teacher support, similarly to previous sections. The results support the notion of teacher roles being versatile (Benson 2013) in nature as the pupils mentioned various roles that teachers played in their learning. Yet, the experiences of motivation were varied, and naturally, due to individual differences and even the possible negative influence of the learning environment (Lamb 2011), not everyone experiences motivation in a similar way.

With regard to the third research question which was investigating the ways the students thought the role of informal learning was considered by the teacher during English lessons, the results showed that contrary to the highly positive individual experiences, teacher support did

not occur as often or was not experienced as strongly. The participants the most often answered that they were encouraged to discuss their own free time English use at school “sometimes” which indicated lower support. Moreover, teacher support for expressing interest in free time learning, support for using the language in other areas of life and discussing the possibilities to use the language outside school were mostly reported to occur sometimes. However, teacher support for allowing the students to exploit their knowledge of English through an important topic was experienced positively, which in turn suggests that teachers offered support and scaffolding in school-oriented environments. The result show that these students felt that their interests were taken into account in learning like the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education’s (2014) suggests, however, the teacher support regarding the students’ free time use did not occur as often. This could be explained by the constraints teachers face (Wang 2017) and balancing between different limitations. Moreover, informal learning might not be at the core of learning in a school-oriented environment, even if the traditional roles of teaching seemed to have changed for the learners to have more responsibility and control over their learning.

The last research question was interested in finding out the experiences the students had on autonomy in their free time. The results showed that the participants actively used English resources mostly based on technology and using English in different ways was seen relatively easy. Most popular ways were music, games, watching movies with English subtitles, watching English tv-series, social media, reading, and using spoken and written English to communicate with others. Moreover, the students actively studied English in their free time, demonstrating both intentionality and learner-controlled aspects of informal learning (Trinder 2017). The participants were generally highly active in including English as part of their everyday lives by using meaningful ways of learning. Therefore, it can be said that informal learning and actively learning in English in free time was occurring often and the participants executed control over their own learning and thus, promoted their own autonomy and experienced themselves as active language users.

5. CONCLUSION

This final chapter concludes the present study by firstly summarizing the aims of the study and reviewing the results to the four questions with relevant literature. Followingly, the practical implications of the present study are discussed. The third section focuses on evaluating of the present study and the last section offers suggestions for future research.

5.1. Summary of the aims and results of the present study

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the experiences of autonomy from Finnish teenaged learners' point of view. Autonomy as a concept has been widely researched from various viewpoints for over thirty years (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012), however, there does not exist much research on the Finnish context regarding autonomy and EFL learning. Moreover, the age group chosen for this study, teenaged learners, are not extensively studied in language learning per se. Therefore, the aim was to shed light on the learners' experiences of autonomy in EFL learning and to investigate the experience of teacher support for the learners' autonomy. In addition, the present study was interested in finding out the role of informal English learning in the participants' free time and whether it is supported by the teacher. The use of English has increased in students' free time in Finland, the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) suggests that the use of free time English and students' interests should be considered when designing teaching and learning of English. Informal learning and autonomy are closely linked to each other as autonomy includes a form of personal activity. Autonomy means taking control of learning both at school and in free time, as individuals take and have more control over their own learning and utilize resources that offer personal relevance and meaningfulness for their own learning (Benson 2013). Learning informally occurs mostly during free time, promoting self-initiated and learner controlled (Trinder 2017) aspects of learning, therefore, moving towards greater learner autonomy.

The answers to the first research question “What kind of experiences do Finnish middle school students have of autonomy in their EFL learning?” had overall relatively positive results. The analysis had four separate themes, and the first research question was answered in each theme from a different viewpoint. First theme was goal orientation, and it was seen from the answers that the participants had relatively high awareness of the learning objectives regarding English learning in general and in English classes, yet they did not set personal learning objectives in English classes as often as they did set general learning objectives. This could be explained by Littlewood’s (1999) notion of proactive and reactive autonomy, as reactive autonomy requires some guidance to be given for the learners to promote their own autonomous learning process.

The second theme was influencing, relevant to autonomy since Benson (2013) states that by giving learners some possibilities to make decisions regarding their own learning might be beneficial for learner autonomy. Most participants experienced that they sometimes had varying experiences on the possibilities of influencing their own learning and English lessons. The participants had mostly sometimes the possibility to influence English classes, learning materials and they felt that they could often express themselves freely. The participants used various resources to influence their own English learning in general such as streaming services, music, and games and English was seen as a natural part of life. However, the participants answered that they can influence their own learning through school-oriented actions. Those actions were focusing better on tasks in classes, listening more, and doing extra work. Moreover, the participants described that they could influence English classes through self-initiated activity (suggesting activities, alternative ways of working) and regulating one’s behavior (control of behavior during class, giving others peaceful learning conditions).

The third theme was metacognition and the key notions in this theme were awareness and self-assessment. According to Benson (2013), self-assessment and awareness of different learning strategies have beneficial qualities for learner autonomy. With regard to the first research question, it was seen that the participants had experienced that they mostly were aware of the suitable learning methods in English classes, could perform self-assessment in general and in English lessons, and were aware of their strengths and weaknesses in language learning. The positive results show that the participants’ English teaching had included metacognitive skills as suggested by the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014).

The fourth theme was activity, and it was briefly answered in relation to the general experiences of autonomy, therefore answering research question one. Based on the results, the participants had strong and positive individual experiences as active language users in their free time and felt they had experienced control over their learning in free time. The result suggests that the students were promoting autonomous learning by their own active learning of English, as own activity is included as an essential element to autonomy, including having more control and overseeing one’s life (Benson and Huang 2013; Legault 2018).

The second research question was “How the students view the role of a teacher in supporting autonomy during their EFL classes?” and the results showed that overall, the support from the

teacher was mostly positive experienced in relation to the participants' goal orientation, metacognition, and activity. With regard to goal orientation, the role of the teacher and teacher support for personal goal setting was experienced strongly positive as the results indicated strong agreement. The participants had experienced that the teacher supports their own personal goal setting. These can be seen as very positive results as Benson's (2013) and Kohonen's (2006) highlight the importance of scaffolding and support by the teacher in developing learner autonomy. However, it needs to be noted that teachers' own conception and awareness of the promotion of autonomy varies based on their own experiences (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012) and therefore, it might be that the teachers in this study were exceptionally well aware of the benefits regarding support and scaffolding.

Teacher support for the for the participants' metacognitive skills was experienced rather positively. The teacher support was in line with the students' own experiences, particularly the role of self-assessment was experienced positively both individually and supported by the teacher. The teachers in this study allowed students to explore different methods and exercise types, however, the degree to what extent teachers can allow freedom for learners is likely to be limited due to external obligations. The students' answers to the open-ended question mostly described teacher support as giving advice, explaining, assisting, and motivating, highlighting the versatile role of a teacher. Instead of teacher-led role and merely explaining with linguistic content, it was seen in the responses that the teachers' role was focused on the students' learning process and methodological support. This is positive from the perspective of autonomy since Benson (2013) highlights the role of the teacher functions as a facilitator and guide and moves beyond merely teaching the linguistic content.

Teacher support was also discussed from the point of view of activity. It was seen in the results that the participants had mostly partly agreed with the statements regarding teacher support for motivating students, explaining the usefulness of language and the role of own activity. The results indicated an overall positive experience of teacher support, similarly to previous sections and themes. However, the experiences of motivation had more variation in the responses. This could be explained due to individual differences, subjectivity of autonomy (Kalaja and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2022) and the possible influence of the learning environment which can be negatively affecting motivation (Lamb 2011).

The third research question was "In which ways do the students think the role of informal learning is considered by the teacher during English lessons?" and this research question was answered in the last section of the analysis. Contrary to the highly positive individual experiences of informal use of English, teacher support for free time learning did not occur as often. The participants were encouraged to discuss their own free time English use sometimes which indicated lower support. Moreover, teacher support for showing interest in students' free time learning, support for using the language in other areas of life and discussing the possibilities to use the language outside school occurred sometimes. However, teacher support for allowing the students to exploit their knowledge of English through an important topic was experienced positively, which in turn suggests that teachers offered scaffolding in school-oriented

environments. The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) suggests taking student interests into account in EFL learning and the students had experienced that they can use important topics in classes. Yet, teacher support for the students' free time use did not occur as often. This could be explained by the constraints teachers face (Wang 2017) educationally and institutionally. Informal learning might not be viewed as important as other dimensions of learning in schools even if the traditional roles of teaching seem to have changed since this study indicates that the participants were encouraged to take more responsibility and control over their learning.

The fourth research question of this study was "Which experiences do students have of autonomy in their free time regarding English language learning?". The results showed that the participants utilized and exploited various resources during their free time, mostly technology-based resources, to influence their English learning which indicates high awareness of using resources to promote learning informally. Some of the participants also reported behaving autonomously and taking control in their free time as they experienced that it is possible to influence English learning at home through school-oriented activities such as extra work, effort in studying and preparation for exams.

In addition, the fourth research question was covered in the last section of the analysis, which was activity. The results revealed that the students used English resources mainly based on technology and using English in different ways was seen relatively easy. The most common resources were music, games, watching English movies, watching English tv-series, social media, reading, and using spoken and written English to communicate. The participants promoted self-initiated learning in their free time, entailing the intentional and learner-controlled dimensions of informal learning (Trinder 2017). The results also showed learner-controlled decision making in relation to their own learning process. The participants of this study were actively including English as parts of their everyday lives by using meaningful resources (also Benson 2013). Informal learning and learning English in free time was occurring often and the participants had more control over their own learning and thus, promoted their own autonomy and experienced themselves as active language users.

5.2. Implications of the present study

The results of the present study indicated that overall, the experiences of autonomy in EFL learning from the perspective of a teenaged learner are relatively positive. The participants indicated a high level of autonomy in terms of being well aware of the learning objectives of English in general and in English classes, also indicating a high goal orientation of their learning processes. Moreover, the students sometimes had the possibilities to influence their English classes and could recognize the ways of influencing their own learning by using own activity and behavior which suggest high learner control of one's own learning, therefore developing greater learner autonomy. In addition, the students experienced having good metacognitive

skills. With regard to informal learning, the participants were also highly active users of various resources to support their own learning in their free time and exploited the meaningfulness of these resources and affordances. To conclude, in each theme it was seen that the individual experiences of autonomy were mostly positive. Nevertheless, despite the overall positive results, it is important that students receive support to uphold and further develop their autonomy, since scaffolding (Benson 2013; Kohonen 2006) is essential in continuing to promote higher learner autonomy.

The study showed that even if teachers support pupils, some aspects could be further taken into account such as the support for informal learning. This information could be considered already in teacher training as teachers' own conceptions and beliefs have a pivotal role in how autonomy is understood and viewed in the classroom (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012; Kohonen 2006). However, as stated in the analysis, teachers are guided by curricular and institutional demands and guidelines on desirable behavior in the classroom and promoting full learner autonomy in the classroom requires balancing. The complex relationship of the classroom and learner could be further researched in the future to gain better awareness of the role of autonomy and the classroom.

The results showed that even if the students were active language users in their free time and recognized free time learning of English as a part of life, they did not experience teacher support for free time learning occurring as often. Therefore, it could be argued that it is essential to consider also this side of learning is not left without assistance and support. Teachers can support learners' psychological side of autonomy and life-long learning if they explain that what is learned in the classroom could be exercised outside the class (Intraboonsom et al. 2020). Therefore, supporting students' informal learning can in fact promote their autonomy and agency as language users. However, it needs to be noted that according to the results, the students received some support, yet the general support was lower with free time learning than it was for metacognitive skills and goal orientation.

5.3. Evaluation of the present study

The respondents in this study were from two different schools and no larger generalizations of the results can be made based on the two schools. Moreover, as there were altogether 85 respondents, the overall number should be larger for the data to be largely generalizable. Yet, by utilizing a questionnaire with closed-ended statements and open-ended questions it was possible to see some congruence in the answers to connect with the literature used in the present study.

One feature that also affected the quality and reliability of the present study was the unbalanced ratio between the number of participants and their grades. The original objective was to have one class representing each grade from two Finnish middle schools, 7th, 8th, and 9th, so that

altogether six classes would have answered. However, the objective was fulfilled only in one school and from the second school two classes, 8th and 9th grade, participated in answering the survey.

The present study was based on mostly qualitative content analysis and therefore, the results cannot be largely generalized based on qualitative data. Moreover, one limitation of the directed content analysis the present study utilized is that the analysis is based on existing theory and concepts which can affect the research process. As Hsieh and Shannon (2005) note, when using a directed content analysis, the researcher could be more likely to find evidence from the data which is supportive instead of non-supportive in relation to the theory. Yet, one of the strengths of this approach is that the already existing theory can be promoted, and new information can be added (Hsieh and Shannon 2005).

The quantitative analysis in this study was based on counting statistical figures and percentages. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010:97) explain that descriptive statistics do not allow drawing any generalizable conclusions. Therefore, one limitation of this study was not including a statistical analysis. Moreover, a statistical comparison could have been utilized to conduct a comparison between genders since the participants included the information in the questionnaire, but it was not used in the present study. With regard to the questionnaire, it included 36 statements altogether and not every statement was included in the analysis. Therefore, some information was left out and it could affect the quality of the present study.

5.4. Suggestions for future research

Autonomy is an important topic, and it could be further studied both qualitatively and quantitatively. As mentioned in the previous section, the present study offers possibilities for future research in terms of adding a quantitative statistical analysis to further deepen the results to investigate whether any of the results are statistically significant. Moreover, a statistical comparison could be possible in terms of comparing differences in the responses by looking at grade and gender differences. Also, one aspect that was not included in the present study that could be researched is comparing whether the answers had differences between the schools or if the participants' school correlated with the experiences of autonomy. It is possible that by adding an extensive quantitative analysis in addition to the already existing information, more nuances and differences between groups could be detected. By adding more participants and an extensive analysis, the results could be made more generalizable.

The experiences of autonomy from a teenaged learners' view could be further researched also qualitatively by adding interviews as part of research. As this age group has not been extensively researched from the perspective of autonomy as EFL learners, interviews could offer valuable insights in addition to the numerical data from the questionnaire and open-ended questions. Most of the participants in this study could answer in detail in the open-ended questions

and therefore, interviews could add more to the existing research on this topic. However, due to the subjective nature of autonomy, the interviews might prevent larger generalizations, but could increase the information of teenaged language learners and their relationship to autonomy in EFL learning. The information the present study has given is important in developing English language teaching, as it provides more information of teenaged learners as language learners. It also provides information about the ways in which autonomy is experienced by teenaged pupils and how it can be supported. Yet, more research is needed to acquire a more extensive image of the role of autonomy in teenaged learners' lives to generalize the findings of this study.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alvarez Ayure, C. P., Peña, C. B., & Martínez Orjuela, M. L. (2018). Promoting the use of metacognitive and vocabulary learning strategies in 8th graders. *Íkala*, 23(3), 407–430. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.ikala.v23n03a07>
- Benson, P. (2013). *Teaching and researching autonomy* (Second edition). Routledge.
- Borg, S., & Al-Busaidi, S. (2012). *Learner autonomy: English language teachers' beliefs and practices*. *ELT Research Paper 12-7*. London: British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/b459%20ELTRP%20Report%20Busaidi_final.pdf
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Butler, Y., & Lee, J. (2010). The effects of self-assessment among young learners of English. *Language Testing - LANG TEST*, 27, 5–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532209346370>
- Callanan, M., Cervantes, C., & Loomis, M. (2011). Informal learning. *WIREs Cognitive Science*, 2(6), 646–655. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.143>
- Chateau, A., & Tassinari, M. G. (2021). Autonomy in language centres: myth or reality? *Language Learning in Higher Education*, 11(1), 51-66. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/cercles-2021-2002>
- Coleman, J. (2021). *The teacher and the teenage brain*. Routledge.
- Council of Europe (2020), *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at www.coe.int/lang-cefr.

- DiNçer, S. (2018). Content Analysis in Scientific Research: Meta-Analysis, Meta-Synthesis, and Descriptive Content Analysis. *Bartın Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 176–190. <https://doi.org/10.14686/buefad.363159>
- Dörnyei, Z. & Taguchi, T. (2010). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing* (Second Edition.). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and Evaluating Qualitative Research. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 36(6), 717–732. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1440-1614.2002.01100.x>
- Han, L. (2020). On the Relationship between Teacher Autonomy and Learner Autonomy. *International Education Studies*, 13(6), 153–162. <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ies/article/view/0/42902>
- Han, L. (2017). The Connotations of Language Teacher Autonomy. *English Language Teaching*, 10(10), 134. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v10n10p134>
- Harris, M. (1997). Self-assessment of language learning in formal settings. *ELT Journal*, 51(1), 12–20. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/51.1.12>
- Honarzad, R., & Rassaei, E. (2019). The Role of EFL Learners' Autonomy, Motivation and Efficacy in Using Technology-Based Out-of-Class Language Learning Activities. *JALT Call-Journal*, 15(3), 23-42. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1240916>
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Intraboonsom, C., Darasawang, P., & Reinders, H. (2020). Teacher's Practices in Fostering Learner Autonomy in a Thai University Context. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 11, 194–203. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1102.07>
- Işık, T., & Balçıkanlı, C. (2020). EFL Teachers' Autonomy Supportive Practices for Out-of-Class Language Learning. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 8(4), 63–78. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ije.8.4.04>
- Jing (Peter) Huang, & Benson, P. (2013). Autonomy, agency and identity in foreign and second language education. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 36(1), 7–28. <https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/docview/2522517177/73CF994DA06943D9PQ/1?accountid=11774>

Joshi, A., Kale, S., Chandel, S., & Pal, D. (2015). Likert Scale: Explored and Explained. *British Journal of Applied Science & Technology*, 7(4), 396–403.

<https://doi.org/10.9734/BJAST/2015/14975>

Joshi, K. R. (2011). Learner Perceptions and Teacher Beliefs about Learner Autonomy in Language Learning. *Journal of NELTA*, 16(1–2), 12–29. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v16i1-2.6126>

Kalaja, P., & Ruohotie-Lyhty, M. (2022). Autonomy and Agency. In T. Gregersen, & S. Mercer (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Psychology of Language Learning and Teaching* (pp. 245-259). Routledge. Routledge Handbooks in Applied Linguistics. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429321498-22>

Kohonen, V. (2006). On the notions of the language learner, student and language user in FL education: Building the road as we travel. *AFinLAn vuosikirja*. <https://journal.fi/afinlavk/article/view/59950>

Lamb, T. E. (2011). Fragile identities: Exploring learner identity, learner autonomy and motivation through young learners' voices. *The Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 14(2), 68-85. <https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/scholarly-journals/fragile-identities-exploring-learner-identity/docview/1016751471/se-2?accountid=11774>

Lamb, T.E. (2017) 'Knowledge about language and learner autonomy', in Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (Eds.) (2017) *Language Awareness and Multilingualism*. ISBN 978-3-319-02239-0. In: Encyclopedia of Language and Education. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing Switzerland: 173-186. <https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/download/f04d4d3c8e3d90ac1fee394379f449216eb4e1a2aae5ac4fe93b7f52640b8b9/252867/Lamb%20KALLA%20complete%20final%20rev.pdf>

Legault, L. (2018). The need for autonomy. In V. Zeigler-Hill, & T. K. Schakelford (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences* (pp. 1–3). Cham: Springer. doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8_1120-1

Littlewood, W. (1999). Defining and developing autonomy in East Asian contexts. *Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 71–94. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/20.1.71>

Matrić, M., Brumen, M., & Košir, K. (2019). The Role of Social Relationships in Children's Active EFL Learning. *Psychology of Language and Communication*, 23(1), 302–329. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2478/plc-2019-0014>

Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014. Finnish National Board of Education. [online] https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/perusopetuksen_opetussuunnitelman_perusteet_2014.pdf (15 October, 2021)

Peters, E. (2018). The effect of out-of-class exposure to English language media on learners' vocabulary knowledge. *ITL - International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 169, 142–168. <https://doi.org/10.1075/itl.00010.pet>

Savolainen, T. (2012). Haastava nuori ja koulunkäynti- opas opettajalle. Opetushallitus. http://kalliomaa.net/opas_haastava_2012.pdf

Singh, M. (2015). Key Concepts, Definitions and Assumptions. In M. Singh, *Global Perspectives on Recognising Non-formal and Informal Learning* (Vol. 21, pp. 17–46). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15278-3_2

Spano, S. (2004). Stages of adolescent development. Ithaca, NY: ACT for Youth Upstate Center of Excellence. http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf_stages_0504.pdf

Tran, T. Q. (2020). EFL students' attitudes towards learner autonomy in English vocabulary learning. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 3(2), 86. <https://doi.org/10.12928/eltej.v3i2.2361>

Trinder, R. (2017). Informal and deliberate learning with new technologies. *ELT Journal*, 71(4), 401–412. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccw117>

Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. (2018). *Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi* (Uudistettu laitos.). Kustannusosakeyhtiö Tammi.

Ushioda, E. (2011). Why autonomy? Insights from motivation theory and research. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 5(2), 221–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2011.577536>

Vehkalahti, K. (2014). *Kyselytutkimuksen mittarit ja menetelmät*. Finn Lectura.

Vieira, F. (2020). Pedagogy of Experience in Teacher Education for Learner and Teacher Autonomy. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 22(1), 143–158. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v22n1.78079>

Wijaya, H. (2019). Resource-based Learning: A Paradigm Shift in Materials Design. *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Educational Research and Innovation (IC-ERI 2018)*. Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Educational Research and Innovation (ICERI 2018), Yogyakarta, Indonesia. <https://doi.org/10.2991/iceri-18.2019.24>

Yeung, M. (2019). Exploring the Strength of the Process Writing Approach as a Pedagogy for Fostering Learner Autonomy in Writing among Young Learners. *English Language Teaching*, 12(9), 42–54. ERIC.

Yu, R. (2020). On Fostering Learner Autonomy in Learning English. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 10(11), 1414. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1011.09>

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 (The questionnaire)

Hei!

Tämä kysely kartoittaa sinun kokemuksiasi autonomiasta liittyen englannin kielen oppimiseen sekä luokassa että vapaa-ajalla. Lisäksi tässä kyselyssä on tarkoitus saada selville sinun omia vapaa-ajan oppimisen keinoja.

Autonomialla tarkoitetaan jokaisen yksilön omaa kykyä vaikuttaa omaan elämäänsä ja ottaa vastuuta toiminnastaan suhteessa ympäröivään maailmaan.

Tämä kysely tulee osaksi gradututkielmaa Jyväskylän yliopistossa ja vastaaminen on vapaaehtoista. Mitään henkilökohtaisia tietoja ei kerätä ja vastaaminen tapahtuu ilman nimeä eli anonymisti. Aineisto säilytetään Jyväskylän yliopiston tietosuojajohtajuuden mukaisesti.

Tässä kyselyssä on suljettuja väittämiä, joista valitaan itselle sopivin vaihtoehto. Lisäksi kyselyssä on muutama avoin kysymys, jossa saa vastata laajemmin tai perustella omaa mielipidettä. Aikaa vastaamiseen kuluu n. 5 minuuttia.

Muistathan, että oikeita tai väärä vastauksia ei ole! Lue kysymykset huolella läpi ja mieti rauhassa sinua itseäsi parhaiten koskeva vaihtoehto. Kaikki vastaukset ovat minulle tärkeitä ja auttavat minua maisterintutkielmassani.

Kiitos ajastasi ja vastauksistasi!

Jos herää kysyttävää tai kommentoitavaa, kyselyn tekijään saa yhteyden laittamalla sähköpostia osoitteeseen linda.s.e.knuutila@student.jyu.fi.

1. Aloita merkitsemällä luokkasi.

7.lk

8.lk

9.lk

2. Merkitse sukupuolesi.

Tyttö

Poika

Muu

Kokemuksia yleisesti

3. Tiedän englannin oppimisen tavoitteet

1. En koskaan

2. Harvoin

3. Joskus

4. Usein

5. Lähes aina

6. Aina

4. Asetan itselleni tavoitteita englannin oppimiseen liittyen

1. En koskaan

2. Harvoin

3. Joskus

4. Usein

5. Lähes aina

6. Aina

5. Tiedostan omat vahvuuteni ja heikkouteni kielten oppimisessa

1. En koskaan

2. Harvoin

3. Joskus

4. Usein

5. Lähes aina

6. Aina

6. Osaan arvioida omaa oppimistani

1. En koskaan

2. Harvoin

3. Joskus

4. Usein

5. Lähes aina

6. Aina

7. Osaan liittää englannin opiskelun osaksi omaa elämää minulle tärkeiden aiheiden kautta
- 1. En koskaan**
 - 2. Harvoin**
 - 3. Joskus**
 - 4. Usein**
 - 5. Lähes aina**
 - 6. Aina**
8. Kuvaile, millä tavalla voit itse vaikuttaa omaan englannin oppimiseesi.

Kokemukset luokassa

9. Tiedän englannin oppituntien tavoitteet
- 1. En koskaan**
 - 2. Harvoin**
 - 3. Joskus**
 - 4. Usein**
 - 5. Lähes aina**
 - 6. Aina**
10. Asetan itselleni tavoitteita englannin oppitunneilla
- 1. En koskaan**
 - 2. Harvoin**
 - 3. Joskus**
 - 4. Usein**
 - 5. Lähes aina**
 - 6. Aina**
11. Tiedän itselleni sopivimmat oppimistyötavat englannin tunneilla
- 1. En koskaan**
 - 2. Harvoin**
 - 3. Joskus**
 - 4. Usein**
 - 5. Lähes aina**
 - 6. Aina**
12. Saan itse vaikuttaa tunnin kulkuun
- 1. En koskaan**
 - 2. Harvoin**
 - 3. Joskus**
 - 4. Usein**
 - 5. Lähes aina**

6. Aina

13. Saan valita materiaaleja englannin tunneilla

- 1. En koskaan**
- 2. Harvoin**
- 3. Joskus**
- 4. Usein**
- 5. Lähes aina**
- 6. Aina**

14. Osaan arvioida omaa oppimistani englannin tunneilla

- 1. En koskaan**
- 2. Harvoin**
- 3. Joskus**
- 4. Usein**
- 5. Lähes aina**
- 6. Aina**

15. Saan ilmaista itseäni avoimesti englannin tunneilla

- 1. En koskaan**
- 2. Harvoin**
- 3. Joskus**
- 4. Usein**
- 5. Lähes aina**
- 6. Aina**

16. Kuvaile, millä tavalla voit vaikuttaa siihen, mitä oppitunneilla tapahtuu

Kokemuksia opettajasta oppimisen tukena

17. Opettaja antaa minun valita sopivimmat työtavat itselleni

- 1. Täysin eri mieltä**
- 2. Eri mieltä**
- 3. Osittain eri mieltä**
- 4. Osittain samaa mieltä**
- 5. Samaa mieltä**
- 6. Täysin samaa mieltä**

18. Saan vaikuttaa aikataulujen suunnitteluun

- 1. Täysin eri mieltä**
- 2. Eri mieltä**
- 3. Osittain eri mieltä**
- 4. Osittain samaa mieltä**
- 5. Samaa mieltä**

6. Täysin samaa mieltä

19. Saan opettajalta useita tehtävävaihtoehtoja

- 1. Täysin eri mieltä**
- 2. Eri mieltä**
- 3. Osittain eri mieltä**
- 4. Osittain samaa mieltä**
- 5. Samaa mieltä**
- 6. Täysin samaa mieltä**

20. Opettaja tukee minua asettamieni tavoitteiden saavuttamisessa

- 1. Täysin eri mieltä**
- 2. Eri mieltä**
- 3. Osittain eri mieltä**
- 4. Osittain samaa mieltä**
- 5. Samaa mieltä**
- 6. Täysin samaa mieltä**

21. Opettaja antaa minun arvioida omaa etenemistäni

- 1. Täysin eri mieltä**
- 2. Eri mieltä**
- 3. Osittain eri mieltä**
- 4. Osittain samaa mieltä**
- 5. Samaa mieltä**
- 6. Täysin samaa mieltä**

22. Opettaja antaa valita työskentelenkö yksin vai ryhmissä

- 1. Täysin eri mieltä**
- 2. Eri mieltä**
- 3. Osittain eri mieltä**
- 4. Osittain samaa mieltä**
- 5. Samaa mieltä**
- 6. Täysin samaa mieltä**

23. Opettaja motivoi minua englannin opiskelussa

- 1. Täysin eri mieltä**
- 2. Eri mieltä**
- 3. Osittain eri mieltä**
- 4. Osittain samaa mieltä**
- 5. Samaa mieltä**
- 6. Täysin samaa mieltä**

24. Opettaja kertoo, miksi kielen opiskelu on hyödyllistä

1. Täysin eri mieltä
2. Eri mieltä
3. Osittain eri mieltä
4. Osittain samaa mieltä
5. Samaa mieltä
6. Täysin samaa mieltä

25. Olemme keskustelleet oman aktiivisuuden merkityksestä kielen oppimisessa

1. Täysin eri mieltä
2. Eri mieltä
3. Osittain eri mieltä
4. Osittain samaa mieltä
5. Samaa mieltä
6. Täysin samaa mieltä

26. Millä tavoin opettaja tukee sinua englannin oppimisessasi?

Vapaa-ajan englannin käyttö

27. Käytän aktiivisesti englantia vapaa-ajallani

1. En koskaan
2. Harvoin
3. Joskus
4. Usein
5. Lähes aina
6. Aina

28. Käytän eri tapoja kielen oppimiseen vapaa-ajalla (pelit, musiikki, sarjat ym.)

1. En koskaan
2. Harvoin
3. Joskus
4. Usein
5. Lähes aina
6. Aina

29. Opettaja kannustaa minua kielen käyttöön muilla elämäni osa-alueilla (vapaa-aika)

1. En koskaan
2. Harvoin
3. Joskus
4. Usein
5. Lähes aina
6. Aina

30. Opettaja sallii minun hyödyntää muuta tietämystäni englannista omasta elämästäni jonkin minulle läheisen aiheen kautta
1. En koskaan
 2. Harvoin
 3. Joskus
 4. Usein
 5. Lähes aina
 6. Aina
31. Opettaja on kiinnostunut vapaa-ajan englannin käytöstäni
1. En koskaan
 2. Harvoin
 3. Joskus
 4. Usein
 5. Lähes aina
 6. Aina
32. Minua kannustetaan koulussa kertomaan vapaa-ajan englannin käytöstäni
1. En koskaan
 2. Harvoin
 3. Joskus
 4. Usein
 5. Lähes aina
 6. Aina
33. Keskustelemme koulussa mahdollisuuksista käyttää kieltä vapaa-ajalla
1. En koskaan
 2. Harvoin
 3. Joskus
 4. Usein
 5. Lähes aina
 6. Aina
34. Minun on helppo löytää tapoja käyttää kieltä vapaa-ajallani
1. En koskaan
 2. Harvoin
 3. Joskus
 4. Usein
 5. Lähes aina
 6. Aina
35. Käytän englantia vapaa-ajalla toisten ihmisten kanssa
1. En koskaan

- 2. Harvoin**
- 3. Joskus**
- 4. Usein**
- 5. Lähes aina**

36. Millä tavalla käytät englantia vapaa-ajallasi (esim. musiikki, pelit, sarjat)?

Appendix 2 (Original examples in Finnish)

- (1) “Voin harjoitella englantia koulun ulkopuolella. Voin myös harjoitella englantia minulle parhaalla keinolla eli ihan vaan puhumalla sitä”
- (2) “Lukemalla tai katsomalla englanninkielisiä elokuvia sekä muutenkin liittämällä englantia jotenkin enemmän elämääni. Myös esimerkiksi hyvät yönunet ja halu oppia auttavat asiaan.”
- (3) “Katsoo, lukee, pelaa ja kuuntelee englanninkielisiä ohjelmia, elokuvia, pelejä ja kirjoja esim. YouTube / Netflix. Itse olen katsonut paljon ohjelmia ja pelannut videopelejä, ja siinä on oppinut todella hyvin!”
- (4) “Teen enemmän kotona ja luen kokeisiin paremmin. Keskityn opiskeluuni enemmän. Teen vähän ylimääräistä.”
- (5) “Tekee kaiken huolella ja kuuntelee tunneilla.”
- (6) “Keskittymällä omiin tehtäviin enemmän kuin muihin asioihin.”
- (7) “Vaikka ehdottamalla opelle erilaisia tehtäviä.”
- (8) “Voin esimerkiksi joskus kysyä opettajalta voinko tehdä tehtäviä eri tavalla, kuin kirjassa tai vihkossa käsketään. Ja voin vaikka kysyä, että voinko mennä tekemään käytävään hiljaisesti englannin tehtäviä.”
- (9) “Ehdottamalla esimerkiksi opettajalle mitä tehtäisiin tunneilla, ettei aina olisi samanlaiset tunnit.”
- (10) “Pidän työrauhan ja olen nätisti.”
- (11) “Käyttäytymällä rauhallisesti saat tunnin pidettyä rauhallisempana, silloin on helpompi opiskella kaikille.”
- (12) “Tekemällä ja keskittymällä annettuihin tehtäviin ja antaa toisille työrauhan ja kysyä tarvittaessa apua.”
- (13) “Jos minulle tulee joku ongelma, jota en pysty selvittämään niin hän pyrkii auttamaan minua sen selvittämisessä.”

- (14) “Kannustamalla ja kehumalla vahvuuksia. Kertomalla rehellisesti missä on parannettavaa.”
- (15) “Hän antaa vinkkejä, miten tehtäviä voi tehdä ja minkälaisia tavoitteita minun kannattaa laittaa itselleni. Ja opettaja kannustaa jatkamaan hyvää työtä.”
- (16) “Pelaan pelejä joissa minun täytyy puhua englantia. Puhun välillä myös perheeni kanssa englantia kotona. Katson todella paljon englanninkielisiä sarjoja.”
- (17) “Lähes kaikki media jota kulutan on englanniksi, kuuntelen englanninkielistä musiikkia ja katson sarjoja usein jopa ilman suomenkielisiä tekstityksiä.”
- (18) “En ole aikaisemmin juuri käyttänyt englannin kieltä vapaa-ajalla, mutta olen yrittänyt käyttää enemmän englantia jotta englannin osaamiseni paranisi.”