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A Study on Autonomy and its Influencing Factors in Adult Language Learners

Relatore
Ch. Prof. Carmel Mary COONAN

Correlatore
Ch. Dott. Marcella MENEGALE

Laureando
Lavinia SELLA
matricola 844997

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ABSTRACT

The last three decades have seen a growing interest in the concept of autonomy. In the field of language education, autonomy is defined by Holec as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (1981), and by Little as "a capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent acquisition" (1991). The autonomous learner is someone who is responsible for their own learning, has an active role in its planning, and is able to reflect back on it, identifying strengths and weaknesses. This work hopes to investigate the background factors that influence autonomy and the awareness of the learners on the topic. An overview of the theory on autonomy will be presented, with particular focus on the autonomous language learner and the role of the teacher in the autonomous setting. A few models for fostering autonomy will also be presented, as well as published studies on real life attempts at developing autonomy. In relation to this thesis, a case study was conducted on 44 adults learners who attended an English course at the Centro Linguistico d'Ateneo at Ca' Foscari University. A questionnaire and an objective meter for measuring autonomy based on its four main areas were devised. Three main aspects emerged from the three research questions. The first is that there are indeed background factors that influence autonomy, but due to the limited number of subjects the results were not conclusive. Secondly, most learners seemed to be stronger, or weaker, in one area of autonomy, and different areas were influenced by different background factors. Lastly, through an open question it emerged that the majority of learners did not have a clear idea of what it means to be autonomous, but most seemed to associate the term with being a strategic learner. This last result is particularly interesting as it shows the need to make learners not only more autonomous, but also more aware of what it means to be an autonomous language learner.

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1   INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades the concept of autonomy has been a central point of discussion in the field of language teaching and learning. Terms like *autonomy*, *independence*, and *self-directed learning* have been used in many different situations and, as Wenden (1991:11) points out, "few teachers will disagree with the importance of helping language learners become more autonomous as learners". While there is a general consensus on this statement, Benson and Voller (1997:1) note that there is still some confusion regarding the exact meaning of autonomy and its implications for language education.

One of the main issues is that experts in the field may be discussing and researching autonomy, but most of their work is still limited to theoretical knowledge (Little et al. 2003:3). Applications in the classroom are still rare and most students are not aware of what it means to be autonomous in learning a language. This is particularly true within the Italian school system, where, as Balboni (2002:15) notes, the idea of the teacher as omniscient and infallible is still very much present, anything less is seen as degrading. Unfortunately this means that students rely solely on their teacher's instructions and when they leave high school, they do not know how to study a language effectively by themselves. This study hopes to investigate autonomy in a practical settings and on real learners.

We decided to conduct a study on adult learners attending courses at the Centro Linguistico di Ateneo of Ca' Foscari University, to be carried out through a quantitative questionnaire. The first point to investigate is whether external factors, such as age and the level of knowledge of the language, influence the autonomy of the learner. Secondly, the data will be examined to check if there are particular areas of autonomy where students are consistently weaker, and hypotheses will be made as to why that may be. A final question will examine the learners' idea of autonomy, what they understand the expression "autonomous learner" to mean and whether their awareness is reflected in how autonomous they are.

Chapter 2 will review the literature on autonomy. It will present a brief overview of the changes in language education that have brought autonomy to the spotlight. Some definitions

of autonomy will be given, and the notion of autonomy will be confronted with those of self-directed learning and independence. Subsequently, the figure of the autonomous learner will be looked at, as well as that of the teacher in his new role. Because autonomy has to be fostered to realize its full potential, a few models for implementing learner autonomy will also be presented. Finally some considerations will be made on the psychological aspects of language education.

Chapter 3 will introduce the research project that is at the center of this study. The methodology will be illustrated and the three research questions will be presented and analyzed in depth. A section of this chapter will deal with the difficulties encountered while attempting to measure autonomy and will describe how the issues were resolved.

Chapter 4 will illustrate how the data collected was coded and analyzed.

Chapter 5 will discuss the data in relation to the initial research questions, illustrating the most interesting points that emerged, as well as issues that became evident during the development of the project.

Chapter 6 will sum up the project and the findings that emerged.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will present a theoretical overview that will provide the basis for the research. First, a general introduction will provide the frame to start discussing autonomy. Due to the very vast extent of the material on autonomy, this work will only focus on autonomy in the field of language education, although it should be kept in mind that autonomy is not limited to this field. Also, we will not deal with the purely theoretical grounds of autonomy[1]. There will instead be particular emphasis on the characteristics of an autonomous learner and on role of the teacher within a framework of autonomous learning. Section 2.4 will present some models to implement and foster learner autonomy, and it will be followed by a brief discussion on learner portfolios and real-life studies on autonomy.

2.1   DEFINING AUTONOMY

Since the 1980s, there has been increasing interest on the subject of autonomy in foreign language education. This interest is the result of a shift in focus: from language *teaching* to language *learning*. The concept of autonomy concentrates in itself many theories and approaches that have been central issues in language education over the last three decades. Among those are the learner-centered approach, the figure of the active language learner, and the attempts to make students more independent in their learning and in their use of language (Littlewood 1996:427). Figure 1 shows the main points of the student-centered versus the traditional teacher-centered approach, which is an interesting starting point to begin thinking about autonomy.

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[1] For a more theoretical and in-depth introduction see Part I in Benson, Voller (1997).
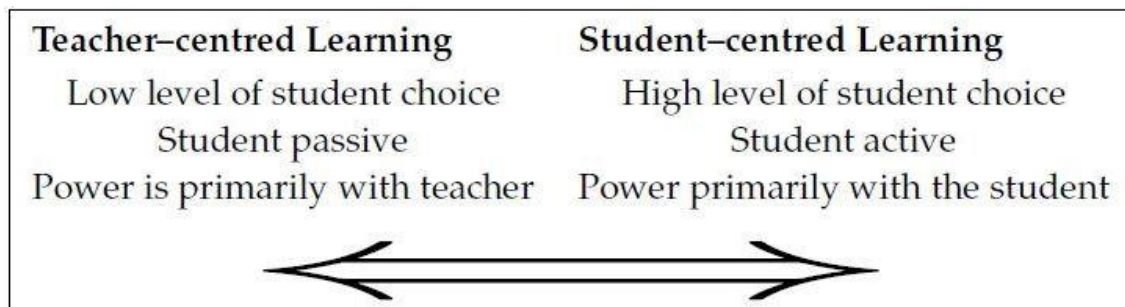
Figure 1 Key points of teacher-centered and student-centered learning (O'Neill, McMahon 2005).

Before attempting to define autonomy, it is necessary to point out that there is not a single conclusive definition, but many different ones. Each one derives from a different underlying perspective, thus giving more importance to some aspects over others. Still, there has not been much debate over the fundamental features of autonomy (Benson, Voller 1997:2).

The most quoted definition is by far the one given by Holec (1981:3): autonomy is "the *ability to take charge of one's own learning*." This is the core of what it means to be autonomous. The learner has to be the active protagonist of his learning and he has to "hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning" (*ibid*.). The learner should determine the objectives, the contents, the methods, he should monitor and in the end evaluate his learning.

Holec refers specifically to adult learners. It is harder for younger learners to achieve this kind of control over their learning, because for the most part it takes place in school. Nonetheless, autonomy as an "ability is not inborn but must be acquired either by 'natural' means or (as most often happens) by formal learning" (*ibid*.), and accepting responsibility can be done with the help of a teacher or without (*ibid*.:4). Therefore, Holec's definition does not exclude young learners, or adults taking part in formal classes.

Bergen (1990, cited in Dam 1995:2) explains:

> *Learner autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a socially responsible person. An autonomous learner is an active participant in the social processes of learning, but also an active interpreter of new information in terms of what she/he already and uniquely knows.*

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This definition, while it does not contradict Holec's, focuses more on the social aspect of learning and on the uniqueness of each learner, who is first and foremost an individual. Each person brings to his learning a unique combination of knowledge and past experiences, that results in different attitudes towards the learning task and different outcomes.

Like Bergen, Little (1991:4) also identifies autonomy as "a *capacity* – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent acquisition." This definition highlights in particular the responsibility of the learner to make conscious choices and thinking critically about his learning path. The learner has to develop two skills: he has to learn to abstract himself from the long-term learning process, which can last from weeks to years, and also learn to abstract from the immediate task at hand and "plan, monitor or evaluate their own on-the-spot linguistic performance" (Ridley 1997:1).

To Benson, autonomy is "a multidimensional capacity that will take different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different contexts or at different times" (2001:47). Thus, autonomy is not a steady condition, but can change at different stages of life, or in different learning situations.

One of the keywords that keeps appearing is *capacity*. Holec (1988 cited in Ibrahim-González, Noordin 2012:1066) explains what this means for a language learner:

> *Just as the ability to drive a motor vehicle does not necessarily mean that whenever one gets into a car one is obliged to take the wheel, similarly the autonomous learner is not automatically obliged to self-direct his learning either totally or even partially. The learner will make use of his ability to do this only if he so wishes and if he is permitted to do so by the material, social and psychological constraints to which he is subjected.*

This is interesting because it implies that the autonomous learner does not have to be autonomous all the time. At times he may want to be led by the teacher, while at other times he may want to take charge of all aspects of his learning. The important thing is that he *can* be autonomous; he has the capacity to be. Macaro (1997:168) also recognizes two main requirements for autonomy to exist: "autonomy is an ability which is learnt through knowing *how* to make decisions about the self as well as being *allowed* to make those decisions". As Holec said, it is not enough to know how to be autonomous. The learner must also be put in the condition to exercise his autonomy .

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In a more recent article, Benson (2011:16) summarizes the changes in the idea of autonomy over the last decade. He notices that while the scope has expanded, to include new technologies for instance, the three major points that he considers fundamental have remained unchallenged by the academic community. These are:

1. Learners have a tendency to naturally control their learning
2. Learners are capable of developing autonomy
3. Autonomous learning is a more effective way to learn a language, compared to non-autonomous learning.

According to Benson, these claims "relate to the *reality* of autonomy, on the one hand, and to the feasibility, and value of educational interventions that aim to foster it on the other." (*ibid*.). Therefore, they justify the steady interest in autonomy. If it were recognized that autonomy is not useful or that it is impossible to achieve, such interest would be pointless.

To conclude this section, the diagram by Littlewood (1996) in Figure 2 is a good summary of the main elements that are involved in learner autonomy.
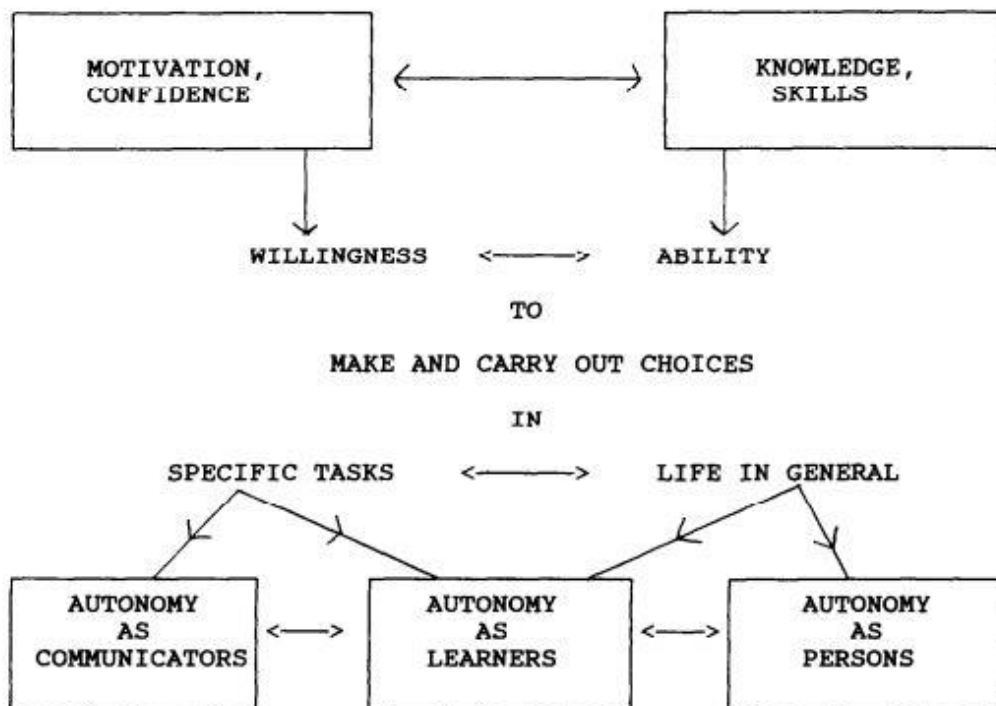

Figure 2 Components and domains of autonomy according to Littlewood (1996:430).

The heart of the diagram are the two labels "willingness" and "ability". According to Littlewood (*ibid.*:428) these are the two main components of autonomy: they are both necessary for autonomous learning to take place. Willingness is more strictly linked to the psychology of learning, in particular both motivation and confidence are necessary to make the learner willing to take responsibility for his learning. Ability is more concerned with the practical aspects of the learning process, because it requires knowledge about the process and skills to make decisions and achieve the objectives.

The bottom half of the diagram shows the three domains of autonomy. Littlewood's framework (*ibid.*:431-432) classifies autonomy into three areas:

- Autonomy as a communicator – this area concerns creative use of language and the use of strategies for effective communication;

- Autonomy as a learner – this domain concerns the ability to work independently and the use of appropriate strategies in the learning process;

- Autonomy as a person – lastly this domain depends on the effective expression of personal meanings and on the ability to create personalized contexts for learning, outside the classroom.

Each area is a key component of autonomy, none of which can stand alone. Instead these three have to develop together in order to achieve autonomy[2].

2.1.1 Misconceptions about autonomy

Because of the difficulties in defining a broad idea such as autonomy, Little (1991:3-4) compiles a list of "what autonomy is not", which is comprised of five common misconceptions about autonomy:

1. Autonomy is not the same as self-instruction, which means learning without a teacher. Some among those who choose to self-instruct may achieve autonomy, while others do not.

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[2] More on developing autonomy can be found in section 2.4 Fostering and implementing autonomy.

2. Autonomy does not mean that the teacher has to abandon all his or her authority in the classroom.

3. Autonomy is not a methodology that the teacher can apply in the classroom. While the teacher's help is indeed important, there is no clear lesson plan that leads to the students becoming autonomous.

4. Autonomy is not a behavior. "We recognize autonomous learners by their behaviour" (*ibid*.:4), but it can present itself in many ways.

5. Autonomy is not a "steady state" (*ibid*.). It can be developed and it is not permanent.

This list provides some interesting points to reflect upon, especially as far as the role of the teacher is concerned, which will be analyzed more in depth in section 2.3. Also, the confusion between autonomy and self-instruction will appear again when we will talk about the results of the questionnaires.

2.1.2 Levels of autonomy

It is clear that autonomy is a very personal attribute, based on the definitions (and misconceptions) about autonomy we have read so far. It can present itself in many different ways, through different behaviors in different people and it is not steady over time (Benson 2001, Little 1993). Such variation has been organized into levels by Littlewood (1996:429-430).

Littlewood provides a list of behaviors that identify the level of autonomy of the learner. He arbitrarily decided to divide his list into seven levels, which are actually not fixed and could be more (or less) depending on the level of detail. Littlewood's levels of autonomy are based on the level of choice that the learner has throughout the learning process. Table 1 shows the seven levels and the type of choices the learner is able to make at a particular level (*ibid*.:429-430).

LEVEL	LEVEL OF CHOICE
1	Learners make their own choices in grammar and vocabulary – such as in role-plays.
2	Learners choose the meanings and the communication strategies to use to convey them.
3	Learners make decisions about goals, meanings and strategies.
4	Learners start shaping their own learning context – such as in project work.
5	Learners make decisions that traditionally concern the teacher, on materials and learning tasks.
6	Learners are involved in making the syllabus, controlling the progression of their learning.
7	Learners can use the language to communicate independently outside the classroom.

Table 1 Littlewood's levels of autonomy (1996:429-430).

The lower levels do not allow for much choice on part of the learner, while the top levels allow for much more freedom to control the learning activities. The interesting feature of this list is that it shows that autonomy is a natural progression, which can be manipulated by the teacher so that "learners gradually increase the scope of their independent choices" (*ibid.:*430).

2.1.3 Autonomy, self-direction and self-instruction

At this point, it could be useful to make a few short clarifications about the terminology used in the field of autonomy. Over the years, because so much and so many researchers have written about it, there has been some confusion between the terms "autonomy", "self-directed learning" and "self-instruction".

Once again, a first distinction is made by Holec (1981:4). He suggests that the adjective "autonomous" should be used when talking about the learner, while the process of learning itself should be called "self-directed". Moreover, being autonomous is necessary in order to carry out self-directed learning, although an autonomous learner does not have to self-direct at all times. As was said before, autonomy is an ability of the learner, therefore the learner also has the freedom to decide whether he wants to exercise his autonomy and to what extent. Despite Holec's distinction, autonomy is often used to describe the learning situation, as well as a learner attitude (Benson 2006:22).

Another perspective is presented by Dickinson (1987 cited in Nunan 1997:192-193). To Dickinson, "self-instruction" should be used when the learning takes place without the control of a teacher. This could also mean that the teacher is not physically present but still making all operational decisions regarding the organization of learning, such as deciding on materials, procedures and assessment. "Self-direction" is located a step further: it describes an attitude towards the learning task, where the learner takes charge of all the decisions, but does not necessarily act on them. "Autonomy" is the final step. The learner is not only responsible for all the decisions concerning his learning but also for their implementation. The autonomous learner does not need to relate on a classroom, a teacher, or a textbook, but is able to act independently of them.

Macaro (1997:167-168) mentions more terms that have been used in the literature to indicate autonomy, such as "independent learning", "flexible learning" and "student-centered learning". These labels developed fairly early in discourse on autonomy and they each reflect a specific attitude towards learning. "Independent learning" underlines the importance of developing strategies for the development of lifelong learning, "flexible learning" is focused on a wider variety of learners and on a type of education that will lead to positive outcomes for all of them, while "student-centered learning" is based on the individualistic idea that the learning environment should adapt to each individual learner.

To avoid confusion, in this work only the term "autonomy" will be used, to indicate both the attitude of the learners and the learning situation.

2.2 THE AUTONOMOUS LANGUAGE LEARNER

After presenting an overview of what autonomy means, we will now discuss the characteristics of the autonomous language learner. Little (2003) states that:

> *There is a consensus that the practice of learner autonomy requires insight, a positive attitude, a capacity for reflection, and a readiness to be proactive in self-management and in interaction with others* [on the part of the learner].

Nunan (1997:193) argues that the fully autonomous learner might be an ideal, rather than a reality. Nonetheless, a degree of autonomy is desirable, if not fundamental, to achieve successful acquisition of the FL. A few scholars have attempted to compile lists of characteristics that pertain to the autonomous language learner.

A seven-point list was compiled early on by Omaggio (1978 cited in Wenden 1998:41-42). According to Omaggio the autonomous learner:

1. Has insight into his learning style and strategies;
2. Takes an active approach;
3. Is willing to take risks;
4. Is a good guesser;
5. Pays attention to both form and content when he uses the language;
6. Develops his own reference system for the target language and is willing to reject hypotheses that don't apply;
7. Has an outgoing approach to the target language.

Breen and Mann (1997:134-136) propose a similar list. Their version is composed of qualities that characterize the autonomous learner. The eight qualities are:

1. The learner's stance – which is his relationship with the contents he has to learn, with the resources available. "Autonomy is seen as a *way of being* in the world" (*ibid*.:134), that has to be discovered, and not learned like Holec suggested;
2. The desire to learn that specific language. It does not matter if the motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic, as long as there is a desire to learn;
3. A strong sense of self, so that self-confidence is not undermined by a negative assessment given by any significant person in their learning process. This way the assessment can be used a source for improvement, rather than be discarded as a source of anxiety;
4. Metacognitive capacity, which means that the autonomous learner can step back from the task at hand and reflect on it and its usefulness[3];

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[3] Little (1991) and Ridley (1997) also write about the metacognitive capacity – see chapter 2.1, as well as Wenden (1998) on how to foster autonomy through metacognitive awareness – see chapter 2.4.

5. Management of change – the autonomous learner is "*alert to change and able to change* in an adaptable, resourceful and opportunistic way" (*ibid*.:135), as a consequence of the metacognitive capacity;

6. Independence, from the educational framework of the classroom. He can make use of the resources he has available, but he is not dependent on an external framework. "*The locus of responsibility for instruction has shifted from the teacher to the learner*." (*ibid*.);

7. A strategic engagement with learning, which entails making use of the environment in a strategic way. The autonomous learner can "choose the right thing at the right time for the right reasons against their own evolving criteria" (*ibid*.:136), meaning that they can construct their own personalized curriculum.

8. A capacity to negotiate; negotiation has to take place with the other actors involved in his learning process. As much as the learner is autonomous, he is never alone in his learning, given the social nature of it. The learner has to negotiate between his own needs and those of others in his learning context.

While these lists are undoubtedly useful, they encompass a wide variety of qualities, skills, cognitive attitudes and behaviors. It would be impossible to describe every attribute of every learner, therefore these lists should only be used as guidelines. Not every learner is autonomous in the same way. All in all, the autonomous learner has to be a well-rounded person, sure of himself and able to take charge of his own learning.

An interesting connection can be made between the prototype of the autonomous language learner that was just discussed and "the good language learner". This concept first came up in the 1970s, when researchers investigated a group of real-life successful learners. Naiman (1978) and Rubin (1975) identified the good language learner as someone who has a personal learning style and strategies, is active in his learning, is empathic, is not afraid to experiment, is willing to practice and to use the language to communicate. Some of these characteristic are shared by the autonomous learner, in particular the necessity to be active and responsible. Ridley (1997:52-54) points out that the good language learner is first and foremost a balanced learner. He possesses emotional intelligence that allows him to deal with

the psychological demands of the learning task, but he also has skills and knowledge to deal with the practical aspects.

In this regard, a recent study conducted by Maftoon, Daftarifard and Lavasani (2011) in Iran on a group of 56 students investigated the relations between being a good language learner, autonomy, group cohesiveness and group norm. They found that all the successful language learners were also autonomous, thus confirming that autonomy is beneficial to the student and his learning outcomes.

2.3 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

As previously said in chapter 2.1.1, a common misconception about autonomous learning is that the teacher becomes superfluous. Voller (1997) observes that in theory, there is a paradox in autonomy: "the truly autonomous learner does not need a teacher at all" (*ibid*.:107). In this respect Little (2002:81) writes:

> *The various freedoms that autonomy implies are always conditional and constrained, never absolute. As social beings our independence is always balanced by dependence, our essential condition is one of interdependence; total detachment is a principle determining feature not of autonomy but of autism.*

This statement implies that the teacher does have a role, and so does the rest of the social setting in which the learning takes place. Barnes (1992 cited in Rungwaraphong 2012) distinguishes then between two types of teachers: the transmission teacher, who merely "transmits" his knowledge and verifies that the students have received it, and the interpretative teacher, who considers the student an active participant in the learning process: his interest is in fostering learner autonomy, while for the transmission teacher the students are merely passive participants.

Voller (1997:101-106) presents an exhaustive review of literature on the role of the teacher in autonomous learning – or the role of the "interpretative teacher". He presents a list of different labels given to the teacher in the literature, and identifies three main groups of common characteristics:

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- The teacher as facilitator. The term *facilitator* is used in language education literature together with *helper* and *co-ordinator*. The main attribute of a facilitator is to provide "*psycho-social* support and *technical* support" (*ibid*:102). The psycho-social support consists of the personal qualities of the teacher, such as being supportive, tolerant, empathic, open, etc., but he also has to motivate learners and raise their awareness towards the learning task. The technical support consists mainly in helping learners plan their learning, defining their objectives, finding the materials and evaluating themselves. It also involves helping the learners acquire skills to implement their autonomous learning.

- The teacher as counsellor. This term has been used in the literature mainly when talking about situations when a learning contract is present or when the learning takes place in a self-access location. Initially, the learners will depend on the counsellor, or consultant, but as they become more autonomous, the counsellor becomes more of a supervisor. According to Voller there is no real difference between a facilitator and a counsellor, except that the latter implies a specific learning situation and a one-to-one interaction with the learner, which is frequent in self-access centers.

- The teacher as resource. Sometimes the term *expert* is also used, and this highlights the fact that the teacher is a *knower*. Voller (*ibid*.:105) argues that the teacher as resource is applicable to self-access situations, while the teacher as expert could be more suitable for a classroom situation. On the other hand, these two aspects could be differentiated by the teacher's view of himself – the resource is a passive provider of information, while the expert focuses on actively giving it out. The role of the teacher as resource is the least researched as of yet and it is still controversial because it shifts the power of knowledge completely to the teacher.

According to Voller (*ibid.*:106-108) the main issue in the relationship between teacher and learner lies in the management of power. Autonomous learning implies that "learners take control of their own learning, that the teacher's power be lessened and the learner's power concomitantly increased" (*ibid.*:106). Therefore the teacher, who traditionally controls the classroom, has to delegate some of his power to the students.

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Voller believes that the best way to achieve autonomy is the negotiated approach. Negotiating the syllabus means that the learners have an active involvement in what they are going to learn and have an opportunity to voice their needs and wants. This leads to the course becoming the learners' course, not just being the teacher's course. The students are then more motivated, more committed and more satisfied. The process of negotiation itself helps develop learner awareness towards their goals and the ways to achieve them (Macalister 2010:156). Therefore, the role of the teacher in the autonomous setting is that of *negotiator*, both with the learners and with the authorities external to the course (Voller 1997:109).

The concept of negotiation is closely related to the notion of interdependence[4]: the teacher has to "actively share the responsibility for learning and teaching with the learners" (Breen, Candlin 1980:99) and in return the learner "should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learn in an interdependent way" (*ibid.*:100). Because of the relations between the participants in the learning process (students and teacher), not only with each other, but also with the syllabus and with the contents of the course, a negotiated approach is the most desirable solution, so that everyone can have an active role in the process.

Another supporter of interdependence as a vital element of autonomy is Boud (1988 cited in Voller 1997:109). He believes that being autonomous, or being independent, implies "an unavoidable dependence at one level on authorities for information and guidance" (*ibid.*). In this context, the teacher is the authority. Boud (*ibid.*:109-110) also proposes three models to reach autonomy[5] through a negotiated approach. These are:

- The individual model: it focuses on the learner as an individual and on his specific needs. In this situation the teacher and the other learners become resources to reach his particular needs. Pairing a learner with a native speaks is an example of the individual model. Little (1988 cited in Voller 1997:110) criticizes this model, as he points out the necessity of the learner to negotiate with a wider group.

- The group-centered model: learning takes place through communication within a group of learners and through group decision-making, such as negotiating the syllabus.

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[4] See Little's quote at the beginning of this section.
[5] More models for fostering autonomy will be presented in section 2.4. Boud's model is used here mainly as an example of the negotiated approach.

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- The project-centered model: this model is built around working in a group towards a common objective. Here the negotiation is about the project itself, how to complete it and its outcome.

A relevant study as far as teachers are concerned, was presented in 2011 by Reinders and Balcikanli: they investigated how teachers are equipped to deal with and foster autonomy in their students. The first point they make is that the teacher himself has to be autonomous. That means that he must be able to apply his own efforts to improve his teaching, he must be able to decide how to teach and how to develop himself professionally (Lamb, Reinders 2008). Therefore, a teacher who is not autonomous, cannot teach his students how to be autonomous. The bulk of Reinders and Balcikanli's research involved looking at the 11 most popular textbooks for teachers and identifying how they deal with the topic of autonomy. Their findings are unexpected: despite the growing interest in the subject, only four of the books contained information on autonomy and none of the books they considered contained concrete examples on how to foster it. Just like their students, the teachers cannot become autonomous without guidance and support, and more readily available resources are needed to prepare them to foster autonomous learners.

Another significant research was carried out in Turkey by Sahinkarakas, Yumru and Inozu (2010). The focus was on preparing the teachers to implement the European Language Portfolio (*ELP*)[6] in their classrooms. The research project followed a group of 28 EFL teachers during a ten week teacher development program. The *ELP* was presented to them as a tool to encourage reflection on the learning process and to raise awareness in the students, thus making them autonomous learners. To show them the benefits of self-reflection, the teachers were also encouraged to keep a diary in which to write what they had learned, how the new notions could be integrated in their teaching, and if they encountered any problems. Some teachers seemed doubtful about the feasibility of the *ELP* in the classroom, mainly because of time restraints, while others were very enthusiastic about the prospect of learning how to raise awareness and foster autonomy in their students.

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[6] For more on the effectiveness of ELP in the classroom, see González (2009) in section 2.4.2.

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Overall, the researchers found that the teacher development program was a successful tool to prompt change in the way English was taught, because the teachers appreciated being active in their own learning process and finding out for themselves what they could adjust in their teaching. This experiment was considered a success because the teachers, especially the skeptical ones, developed a positive attitude towards the ELP, thanks to a process of "experiential understanding, rather than an outsider's imposition" (*ibid.*:73). These findings are in accordance with what was presented by Reinders and Balcikanli (2011); teacher autonomy is a necessary element in creating learner autonomy. Unfortunately Sahinkarakas, Yumru and Inozu encountered difficulties in creating a wider network to make these theories more readily available to teachers, because of a general resistance to the new approach. They suggest that it is necessary to train teachers, before they enter the educational system, so that they can enter the school prepared to implement the use of the *ELP* and to foster learner autonomy.

2.4 FOSTERING AND IMPLEMENTING AUTONOMY

After presenting some theoretical premises to autonomy, it is legitimate to wonder if it is actually worth the time and effort to make learners more autonomous. Little (2003) argues that there are at least three reasons for favoring learner autonomy: if the learners are active in their learning, they will probably be more efficient and more effective, and secondly, being actively involved, they are also motivated to learn, thus solving the problems that are associated with lack of motivation[7]. The third reason is more strongly linked to language education, because of the nature of languages themselves: learning a language means being able to communicate effectively, and effective communication entails many complex skills that can be developed only by actively using the language in spontaneous speech. Autonomous learners are more willing to use the language, with little or no fear of failing, so they are more likely to become successful users of the language.

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[7] For more details about motivation and how it relates to autonomy see section 2.5.

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Section 2.4.1 will present a few theoretical models developed by scholars to implement learner autonomy, while section 2.4.2 will present a few studies on real-life students of different techniques to implement autonomy.

2.4.1 Theoretical models for fostering learner autonomy

One of the most influential models on how to implement autonomy is that of Nunan (1997:192-203). His model sets out to develop autonomy through materials specifically created or modified for this purpose. It is composed of five levels, which are designed to build up autonomy in non-autonomous learners. He bases his model on five self-evident assumptions:

1. most learners are not autonomous to begin with,
2. developing some degree of autonomy is essential to succeed in learning the language,
3. autonomy can be developed through "pedagogical intervention" (*ibid.*:203),
4. there are degrees of autonomy[8],
5. not everyone can develop autonomy to the same extent.

Given these premises, Nunan's five levels of implementation are:

- Level 1 – Awareness. Although this first step may seem obvious, its objective is to raise awareness in the learners about specific task goals, contents of the program and learning strategies. Alongside that, the students will also be thinking about the learning strategies they use and which ones they prefer.

- Level 2 – Involvement. This is a median stage between basic awareness and active engagement in modifying the materials. At this levels the learners are invited to choose between different possible options, such as different tasks, but "the actual task itself is less important than the act of choosing" (*ibid.*:198).

- Level 3 – Intervention. In the third level the learners are actually involved in modifying materials for their own needs. This can be done by adapting materials from a book, or simply by adding tasks to exercises that already in the textbook.

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[8] We already dealt with this aspect in section 2.1.2 Levels of autonomy, about Littlewood's model.

- Level 4 – Creation. The students are then asked to identify their goals, contents and tasks. Because this level is rather complex, it can be broken down into smaller steps. Nunan suggests providing the learners with some type of material and having them create exercises that related to it, possibly in groups. The groups can then exchange the tasks they created with the other groups and work through the tasks.
- Level 5 – Transcendence. At this stage students transcend the classroom. They can link real life language usage to what was learned in the classroom and they will eventually use what they have learned in school in the real world.

In describing his five levels, Nunan points out that there can be elements overlapping between the levels and that it is common for learners to move back and forth between levels, because, as said before, autonomy is not a steady state and often changes over time. Figure 3 outlines the five levels of implementation. For each level Nunan specifies two domains: the experiential content domain, that is *what* the students learn, and the learning process domain, that is *how* they will learn it (*ibid.*:194).

Level	Learner action	Content	Process
1	Awareness	Learners are made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the materials they are using.	Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles/strategies.
2	Involvement	Learners are involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives on offer.	Learners make choices among a range of options.
3	Intervention	Learners are involved in modifying and adapting the goals and content of the learning programme.	Learners modify/adapt tasks.
4	Creation	Learners create their own goals and objectives.	Learners create their own tasks.
5	Transcendence	Learners go beyond the classroom and make links between the content of classroom learning and the world beyond.	Learners become teachers and researchers.

Figure 3 Nunan's levels of implementation (Nunan 1997:195).

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Macaro (1997:169-171) presents a different model to develop autonomy based on different premises. According to him, autonomy should be seen "*as developing potential* in the learner, on how s/he can use it to operate more effectively, rather than as a reaction to difficulties" (*ibid.*:169). He also believes that all learners start off with a certain degree of autonomy, because they can, from the very beginning, accept or reject the established learning style. The issue is how and to what extent learner autonomy can be developed. Macaro divides autonomy into three branches, each to be developed in the learner:

1. *Autonomy of language competence*: this implies developing communicative skills in the learner. He is autonomous in that he knows enough about the FL that he can use the language without the help of someone else, the teacher for instance.

2. *Autonomy of language learning competence*: the learner develops his ability to learn the language and can transfer the skills he has learned to learn a second FL. Balboni (2002:93) lists this competence as one of the fundamental aims of language education, one that will be most useful to the learner throughout his life[9].

3. *Autonomy of choice and action*: having the capacity for autonomy is not enough, if the learner does not have decision-making powers. Therefore learners, and especially teenagers in school, have to be given the possibility to develop autonomy in choosing what is best for their learning. The learners have to be able to: understand why they are learning the FL (even if they do not have a choice because they are in school), understand what their short-term and long-term objectives are, know how to find and use authentic materials in the FL that will help them reach their objectives, and know how they learn best.

According to Macaro (*ibid.:*172) not enough attention is given to the topic of developing learner autonomy in practice. He believes that it is hard for students to start choosing and negotiating elements for the course when the teacher talks to the class in the FL from the very beginning. He finds this conflict to be a great issue: there are great benefits both in developing autonomy and using the FL for all communication in the classroom, but it is hard, if not impossible, to put both in practice simultaneously.

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[9] In Balboni, this aim is called "competenza glottomatetica" in the original Italian.

A third model is proposed by Wenden (1998). Her focus is mainly on metacognition and she suggests that the teacher's aim should be to help the learners "develop a more reflective and self-directed approach to learning their new language" (*ibid*.:531). According to her, most teachers aim to develop autonomy, but she suggests that learners need to widen their knowledge about learning, that is their metacognitive knowledge, so that they may also become more autonomous in their learning. She proposes four steps to raise awareness about the metacognitive processes:

1. *Elicitation* of pre-existing knowledge and beliefs on metacognition;
2. *Articulation* of what the student has become aware of;
3. *Confrontation* of their views with different ones;
4. *Reflection* on the process, expanding or modifying the initial knowledge.

Through the new knowledge on language learning, the learners can be encouraged to look back at their own personal learning experience. They may be able to identify the reason why some areas of their learning were less successful and as they become more aware, they can also be guided to use these realizations in practice to find solutions to their problems. Wenden's aim is to broaden the understanding of the learning process, so that the learner can experiments with different approaches and free themselves more and more of the teacher's guidance, becoming autonomous in making decisions about their own learning and improving the outcomes.

2.4.2 Real-life attempts at improving autonomy

Alongside the theoretical models, many researchers and teachers have conducted their own personal research on real-life students and the impact of different techniques on autonomy. Mourão (2014) concentrated on pre-school children approaching a FL for the first time, others, such as Hiratsuka (2014), Trajtemberg and Yiakoumetti (2011), and Bhattacharya and Chauhan (2010), focused on older students and how their autonomy was impacted by creative techniques like narrative frames and blogging. Other researches concentrated on the effects of individual portfolios, such as Lo's (2010), Yılmaz and Akcan (2012), and González's (2009).

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Mourão's (2014) research focuses on the importance of child-initiated play in the context of pre-primary school learning. Child-initiated play is most useful when it follows the patterns established by adult-led play, in this case the adult is the English teacher. The research is based on observing the children in the English learning areas (ELAs) set up in the classroom by the English teacher: the children are drawn to these areas and naturally play in English, as they do when the English teacher is present. One of the many positive outcomes is that the children are free to experiment, make decision for themselves, mediate with others, and make mistakes; in other words, they are capable of exercising their autonomy, starting from a very young age.

Hiratsuka (2014) conducted a relevant research on Japanese high school students using narrative frames. Narrative frames are templates that have to be filled out by the student following the structure provided by the sentences, and providing personal opinions. Hiratsuka focuses on having the students reflect on what was done during the class, what they liked or disliked, and feedback about the teachers' performances. The narrative frames were given in both English and Japanese, to allow the students to express themselves without anxiety about the language. He also integrated the data with interviews of two teachers and two students. All interviewees expressed positive feelings about using narrative frames, because it was an opportunity to reflect on the activities and on why they were carried out. Moreover, one student pointed out that it was a rare occasion for them to write meaningful personal opinions in English, thus making the narrative frames in themselves a tool to learn English. Therefore, the narrative frames proved to be a valuable tool for students to self-reflect and feel responsible for their learning.

Another form of creative writing that has been shown to be helpful in fostering autonomy is blogging. Trajtemberg and Yiakoumetti (2011) analyzed the blogs of a group of students from the University of Chile. They were particularly interested in the possibility for social interaction offered by blogging. The students were participating in a class and they had to write blog posts about certain topics each week. They were not required to comment on the blog posts, but they often did, sometimes prompted by the course instructor, and in going beyond the required work, they showed personal interest and motivation to learn English.

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Many of the students also reflected and wrote about the usefulness of the blogs, as a new opportunity to write in English, and about the possibility to look back at their own work and follow their progress.

A separate study on blogs was conducted in India by Bhattacharya and Chauhan (2010). Their research questions were more closely focused on the relationship between blogging and autonomy. An interesting aspect of the research is that the 35 participants came from rural backgrounds, where they had had little exposure to English or to technology. Nonetheless, the researchers found that the students really took responsibility towards the tasks, overcoming problems and asking their peers for help and feedback. Because blogging is entertaining and engaging for the students, it could be used to trigger other "constructs like motivation and cognitive skills in an autonomous setting" (*ibid*.:384). Overall, creative outlets that allow for self-reflection have been shown to be useful tools to foster responsibility towards learning and autonomy.

An additional tool that can be helpful to students is the language portfolio. Lo (2010) conducted a research in an Asian setting, in Taiwan, on 101 university students who had to complete individual portfolios. Because of the specific setting, and because a questionnaire revealed the students had no knowledge on portfolios or autonomy, the teacher did not leave all the decision-making power to the students, but acted mainly as a decision-maker, a facilitator and a resource to help guide the students. At the end of the project, the students showed higher levels of awareness regarding learning autonomy and critical thinking in general, thus revealing the portfolio to be a valuable asset.

As far as language portfolios are concerned, the Council of Europe put forward the idea of the European Language Portfolio, or *ELP*. The *ELP* does not have one single version, but can be adapted to different national contexts and languages. It is made up of three components: a language passport, which summarizes the learner's experiences with languages, a language biography, that is the section for setting the goals and self-assessing one's progress, which encourages strategic learning and self-reflection, and finally a dossier, where the learner collects his works in the FL. In 2012 Yılmaz and Akcan conducted a study on how the *ELP* was implemented in Turkey on younger learners, aged 9 to 11 years old. Because of the young age

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of the subjects, the teachers were setting goals and aims, but let the children free to decide on tasks, topics and to express their preferences. Through interviews, a high level of satisfaction was found among the learners; they were aware of the short term aims and found creative ways to achieve them. Yılmaz and Akcan found that the ELP is a very flexible tool, because it provides a framework but also allows for creative thinking and choice, based on personal preferences.

González (2009) conducted a four-year study on the application of the *ELP* in two schools in Spain. The first year was used to familiarize the teachers with the *ELP* and to develop new activities that were designed specifically with a classroom environment in mind. From the second year on, the portfolio was actually introduced to the students. Questionnaires data from the students showed high levels of satisfaction and confidence. Also, because the project was developed over a span of many years, there was time to make changes and implement the portfolio, adding online tools and a FAQ page to serve as reference. González found the first year to be fundamental to bridge the gap between the teachers and the external authority, allowing time to familiarize everyone with the new methods. Additionally, the researcher held school-wide presentations and lectures to talk about the project directly to the students. This gave the students a sense of involvement and made them feel like the authorities (teacher and administration) were supportive. Overall, the ELP proved to be extremely successful. According to the researchers, one of its main positive features is that it shows learning outcomes explicitly, making the learning a real and tangible process. In addition, the portfolio helped develop metacognitive awareness in the students, developing their sense of responsibility and autonomy, in accordance with Wenden (1998).

A final reflection on learning is provided by Shulman (1996 cited in McClure 2001:147): "We do not learn from experience; we learn by thinking about our experience". It is the thinking after the classroom experience that is the strong point of many of these methods for fostering autonomy, be the reflection prompted by writing on a blog, completing narrative frames or updating one's language portfolio.

2.5 AUTONOMY, MOTIVATION AND OTHER PSYCHOLOGICAL VARIABLES

So far, we have mainly dealt with autonomy in relation to the people involved in the learning process. Because autonomy relates strongly to the realm of psychology, there are many other components and variables that go alongside it. One of the main factors that is more strictly linked with autonomy and influences it the most is motivation. A brief theoretical introduction will now present the concept of motivation and Gardner's socio-educational model, which will be relevant to this study. Following this, we will present some researches that deal with motivation and autonomy by Spratt, Humphreys and Chan (2002), and Kormos and Csizér (2014). At the end, attribution theory, goal-setting theory and self-efficacy theory will be touched upon and briefly explained, together with their implications for language learning.

Motivation is defined by Dörnyei as "an abstract, hypothetical concept that we use to explain why people think and behave as they do" (2001:1), more specifically to the educational context, "'motivation' is a general way of referring to the *antecedents* (i.e. the causes and origins) of action" (*ibid*.:6). The first theories on motivation were advanced by Gardner and Lambert (1959 cited in Crookes, Schmidt 1991). Their initial theory was mainly focused on attitudes towards the FL[10]: the integrative attitude, which is a positive disposition and curiosity towards the FL and its community, and the instrumental attitude, where learning is associated with and pursued because of a practical gain. Integrative motivation is most often associated with a positive outcome of the learning process[11]. Another distinction is one between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: intrinsic motivation develops within the person, while extrinsic motivation is effected from the outside. In Table 2 all the possible combinations of these four factors are shown, with examples for each of them, as exemplified by Brown (2000).

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[10] Gardner and Lambert referred mostly to second language (L2), rather than FL, because they developed their research in Canada, where French is a second language, not a foreign language. Their theories can be applied to the mechanisms behind FL learning as well.

[11] There are many studies that focus on motivation. For an example of a study on the importance of integrative motivation see: Hernández T. (2006). "Integrative Motivation as a Predictor of Success in the Intermediate Foreign Language Classroom". *Foreign Language Annals*, 39:4, pp. 605-617.

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	Intrinsic	**Extrinsic**
Integrative	L2 learner wishes to integrate with the L2 culture (e.g., for immigration or marriage)	Someone else wishes the L2 learner to know the L2 for integrative reasons (e.g., Japanese parents send kids to Japanese-language school)
Instrumental	L2 learner wishes to achieve goals utilizing L2 (e.g., for a career)	External power wants L2 learner to learn L2 (e.g., corporation sends Japanese businessman to U.S. for language training)

Table 2 Motivational dichotomies (Brown 2000:166).

The model was expanded by Gardner in 1979 and it is known as the socio-educational model. This version includes four variables: social milieu and the cultural beliefs arousing from it, individual differences, the context of formal and informal language acquisition, and outcomes, both linguistic and nonlinguistic (Gardner 1979 cited in Crookes, Schmidt 1991:472). Since then, many others have developed theories and models, one of the most famous ones being Dörnyei, but for the aims of this research, Gardner's distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation is sufficient.

The relationship between autonomy and motivation has been the object of studies before. An important contribution was provided by Spratt, Humphreys and Chan (2002). They were initially interested in investigating readiness for autonomy in students at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Incidentally, they also found an interesting relationship between autonomy and motivation. According to previous work by Deci and Ryan (1985 cited in Spratt *et al.* 2002:246), motivation is a product of autonomy, because intrinsic motivation "will be operative when action is experienced as autonomous" (*ibid.*) and it can develop in an autonomous learning environment. Dickinson (1995 cited in Spratt *et al.* 2002:246) agrees with this view and writes that "learning success and enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their own learning" (*ibid.*). In analyzing the data, the researchers found that students with high levels of motivation engaged in out-of-classroom activity more frequently than non-motivated students. While they could not definitively show that motivation leads to autonomy, they found that lack of motivation does correspond with lack of autonomy. From this, the possibility for a more complex relationship between motivation

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and autonomy emerged; it is possible that "the relationship between motivation and autonomy works in both directions, changing in direction with different stages in a learner's progress and in learners' lives in general" (*ibid*.:262).

A more in-depth study was conducted by Kormos and Csizér (2014) in Budapest. They set out to analyze the interaction between motivation, self-regulation strategies and autonomy, across three different age groups, from high school students to adults. The results were consistent across all ages and showed that strong motivation is not enough in itself to lead to autonomy if self-regulatory strategies are not present at the same time, because the "motivational variables exert their influence on autonomous learning behavior with the mediation of self-regulatory strategies" (*ibid*.:294). The limit to both these studies is that the levels of motivation, autonomy and the use of strategy was self-reported by the students, which cannot be considered objective.

While there is no conclusive data as to how the relationship between motivation and autonomy develops, going from Dörnyei's statement that motivation is "the antecedents of action" (2001:6), it could be argued that without motivation there is no action, and without action on the part of the learner, there can be no autonomy.

Motivation is not the only psychological variable that interacts with autonomy. Attribution also plays an important role in determining the actions of the learner. Attribution theory was developed in 1958 by Heider within the field of social psychology. Its aim is to describe the general mechanisms behind how people explain the causes of events or behaviors (Grey 2005:13). Weiner (1986 cited in Grey 2005:14) proposes four kinds of attributions that people use to explain every day events. These are: task difficulty, luck, effort, and ability. Task difficulty and luck are external factors that cannot be controlled, while effort and ability are internal attributes that depend on the individual. Attribution theory is relevant in the field of language education because it "attempts to explain current and future learner motivation and effort by investigating and analyzing learner perceptions about themselves" (Smith 2012:22). Good language learners are able to stay motivated by attributing failures to external factors, such as the teacher, and attributing successes to their own hard work. Conversely,

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unmotivated students usually see their lack of success as linked to internal deficiencies, such as lack of ability on their part, and attribute success to external factors like luck (*ibid.*:23).

Connected with the concept of motivation are goal-setting theory and self-efficacy theory. Goal-setting theory was developed by Locke and Latham (1990 cited in Dörnyei 2001:82) to determine how people establish goals for themselves. From a motivational point of view, having goals is a source of motivation, a standard for performance and a factor that increases productivity (Dörnyei 2001:82). This concept is also strongly linked to autonomy, as one of the duties of the autonomous learner is to set objectives and goals for himself. Self-efficacy was described by Bandura (1977, 1997 cited in Zimmerman 2000:83) as a person's judgment of their own capabilities to reach a specific goal. When the goal is achievable, believable, conceivable, and desirable, progression is much faster than when the goal is vague, as was shown by a study by Bandura and Schunk (1981 cited in Dörnyei 2001:83). That is because a person who thinks that the goal is reachable for him, that is if he has a strong sense of self-efficacy, will put in more effort and will be more persistent in striving to achieve the goal (Dörnyei 2001:10-11).

All these elements, motivation, goal-orientedness and self-efficacy, are deeply intertwined and they have a strong relationship with autonomy. They have been briefly introduced because there will be items in the questionnaire referring to these psychological variables. As said before, it is not clear whether autonomy is an antecedent or a result of these factors. This could be a subject for further research, both in the fields of psychology and of language education, but is outside the scope of this research.

3 THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This chapter will be dedicated to outlining the research project, its aims and how it was carried out in practice through a case study. It will also describe the difficulties with measuring autonomy and how the issues were overcome. The questionnaire will then be analyzed, both in its structure and specific questions.

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

In order to investigate the relationship of adult learners with autonomy and FL learning, three research questions have been formulated:

1. Do background factors influence autonomy?

In this research, "background factors" is used as an umbrella term to include all parameters that could influence autonomy. The ones that are considered in this study are:

- Age
- Mother tongue
- Level in the FL[12]
- Other known languages
- Level of education
- Type of motivation for attending a language course

It is hypothesized that these factors do influence autonomy. Since physiological maturity is often corresponded by a deeper intellectual and psychological knowledge of self, older students are expected to be more autonomous.

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[12] Because the questionnaire was completed after an English course, this parameter refers to the student's level of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Learning (*CEFR*), developed by the Council of Europe, which is used by the CLA to divide the students into classrooms. For further reading: Council of Europe (2014). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Oxford: Cambridge University Press.

As stated in section 2.4 most people are not born autonomous, but autonomy can and should be fostered during formal schooling. Therefore a higher level of education should correspond to a higher level of autonomy. It is also hypothesized that motivation plays a role in autonomy: students who are moved by integrative motivation are expected to be more autonomous and more active in their learning than those moved by instrumental motivation. Other known languages are not expected to have a relevant influence, but it is hypothesized that knowing more languages will have a positive influence on autonomy, because in studying more languages the learner has probably developed learning strategies and confidence in his own capabilities. Mother tongue is not expected to have any effect on autonomy.

2. Are there areas of autonomy that are stronger or weaker across the population of participants?
    2.1 If yes, what are the possible reasons?
    2.2 Do the background factors relate to them in any way?

Before introducing the research hypothesis for this question, it is necessary to anticipate what is meant by "areas of autonomy". Section 2.1 defined the main characteristics of the autonomous language learner; in section 3.4.2 the theory will be operationalized into four main areas. These are willingness, responsibility, self-efficacy and strategic learning. Thus, the questions in the questionnaire have been divided into these four main group, and each group has an individual score, separate from the overall autonomy score[13].

It is hypothesized that most people will have one area that is stronger than the others, but that it will not be consistent for everyone. That is to say a person may be overall autonomous but be lacking in self-efficacy, or someone may not be very autonomous but be a very responsible learner at the same time. It is hypothesized that older learners are stronger in the areas of responsibility and self-efficacy, due to feeling more accountable for their own learning and more confident overall. People who have studied more languages in the past, and

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[13] Refer to section 3.6 and to chapter 4 to see how the data is coded and analyzed.

people at a higher level of foreign language, are expected to have higher scores in the strategic learning area, due to having more experience with languages.

3. What do people understand "autonomy" to be?

     3.1 Is it consistent across the population of participants?

     3.2 Is there a relation between individual choices and the autonomy score?

It is hypothesized that students do not have a clear idea of what being autonomous means in the field of language learning. In the questionnaire, the definition of autonomy is split into four partial definitions, each reflecting one of the main areas (willingness, responsibility, self-efficacy and strategic learning). It is hypothesized that the answer to this question will be linked to a stronger score in that specific area, because of a higher level of awareness. One question also asked to define autonomy freely, and it is hypothesized that most of the participants will have a vague or partial idea of what autonomy means or what it implies.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS

The subjects of the study are 44 students attending the courses of English as a foreign language at various levels at the Centro Linguistico di Ateneo (CLA) of Ca' Foscari University, from April 7, 2014 until June 21, 2014.

Initially it was proposed to post the questionnaire on Facebook, or a similar social network, to reach as many people as possible. This option was quickly discarded because of the difficulty to maintain control over such a vast and diverse participant pool.

It was decided to present the questionnaire to CLA students, because they belong to a restricted group, but they also come from different backgrounds, they are of different ages and have different reasons for studying English. Furthermore, they took the decision to take part in the course at CLA and they had to pay for it, which means that they made a conscious

effort to further their linguistic education. This active decision-making process signals a degree of autonomy.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was carried out through a questionnaire, written in Italian. The questionnaire was constructed on Google Drive, a free service available online. It allows anyone with a Google account to access a series of tools to create different types of documents. One of them, called "Form", allows the user to create questionnaires, with many different possibilities for questions and scales to choose from and personalize.

The questionnaire can be seen by anyone online, and it can be sent in the form of a link to email addresses. When the participant clicks on the link he can see the questions. His answers are automatically recorded in an Excel spreadsheet on the Google account of the questionnaire creator, so they are completely anonymous and untraceable. The creator can access the answers on the spreadsheet, s/he can analyze them through Excel or use the automatic graphs made by Google.

The e-mail addresses of the participants were collected during lesson time. The project was explained to them in general terms and they were asked to write down their e-mail address to have the questionnaire sent to them. It was pointed out that it was a voluntary study and they were not obliged to give their address or answer the questionnaire, but that if they chose to participate, their answers would be kept anonymous and used only for this research.

The questionnaire was sent by e-mail to the addresses provided by the students and it was left available online for the students to fill in for a period of three weeks.

3.4 ISSUES WITH MEASURING AUTONOMY

The main difficulties faced when constructing the questionnaire is that there are very few studies that deal with measuring autonomy. This section will present two questionnaires that have been used in attempts to measure autonomy, and it will be explained why they are not suitable for our study. Following, there will be a section explaining the four areas that have been considered to define autonomy.

3.4.1 Existing questionnaires

There are indeed studies that deal with autonomy[14], but most of them rely on self-reports from the subjects. Only few have made attempts to measure autonomy in numeric terms on an objective scale.

One project is called *OMALL* (Online Measure of Autonomy in Language Learning) and it is designed to assess the autonomy of learners who are about to start their tertiary education. This study was carried out[15] at the University of Warwick[16]. It is not suitable for this research because it deals mainly with younger students, who are just entering university. Moreover, according to Dixon, it is more appropriate for Asian students who are not used to Western models of language education, and through the questionnaire, they can confront themselves with elements that are new to them.

The second project is that of Williamson (2007), who developed a scale to measure self-directed learning. Although self-directed learning and autonomy are not synonyms[17], the research can be a good starting point to construct a scale to investigate our own research questions. Williamson's scale is called *SRSSDL* (Self-Rating Scale of Self-Directed Learning)[18]. It is comprised of 60 short sentences, divided into five main areas, which are awareness, learning

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[14] See sections 2.4.2 and 2.5 for examples.
[15] The study was part of the PhD thesis of candidate David Dixon.
[16] The questionnaire can be viewed at:
http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/groups/ellta/circal/omall/ (last viewed on: 06/10/2014).
[17] See section 2.1.3.
[18] The complete scale can be viewed at:
http://tccl.rit.albany.edu/knilt/images/7/72/SRSSDL_Assessment.pdf (last viewed on: 06/10/2014).

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strategies, learning activities, evaluation and interpersonal skills. The learner is asked to rate each sentence with a score from 5 to 1, where 5=always, 4=often, 3=sometimes, 2=seldom, 1=never. The sum of the scores indicates the level of self-directed learning of the student, with the maximum score being 300 and the lowest being 60. Figure 4 illustrates the scoring range and its interpretation as given by Williamson.

Scoring range	Level of self-directed learning	Interpretation
60-140	Low	Guidance is needed from the teacher. Any specific changes necessary for improvement must be identified and a possible re-structuring of the methods of learning identified.
141-220	Moderate	This is half way to becoming a self-directed learner. Areas for improvement must be identified and evaluated, and a strategy adopted with teacher guidance when necessary.
221-300	High	This indicates effective self-directed learning. The goal is to maintain progress by identifying strengths and methods for consolidation of the students' effective self-directed learning.

Figure 4 Interpretation of the results for the SRSSDL (Willimson 2007:72).

There are three main issues that made the SRSSDL unsuitable for this study. The first is that it is not made specifically for language students, therefore some of the statements are too general or don't apply. Secondly, the subjects of our study attended a formal course, so there had to be items in the questionnaire that dealt with autonomy within the classroom, which are not present in Williamson's scale. Finally, all the statements are formulated in a way that points to the "autonomous answer". That is to say, it is obvious that all the statements are positive. This is identified as a flaw because the learners could be swayed in their response to answer what they think they should, rather than giving honest, unbiased opinion. An example of the first eight statements in the first section is provided in Figure 5.

1	**Awareness**
1.1	I identify my own learning needs
1.2	I am able to select the best method for my own learning
1.3	I consider teachers as facilitators of learning rather than providing information only
1.4	I keep up to date on different learning resources available
1.5	I am responsible for my own learning
1.6	I am responsible for identifying my areas of deficit
1.7	I am able to maintain self-motivation
1.8	I am able to plan and set my learning goals

Figure 5 Example of the first eight statements (Williamson 2007:79).

Using a scale that has already been tested in other research projects would mean that the scale has been statistically validated, resulting in a lower margin of error. Unfortunately, neither of these scales are suitable for the project, therefore a new questionnaire and a new scale have been created.

3.4.2 The four areas of autonomy

Because no existing questionnaire is suitable for the purpose of this study, it has been necessary to create a new questionnaire to measure autonomy. Four main components of autonomy have been identified, and the questionnaire for the learners will focus on these four main areas to see where the weaknesses or strengths are, or if there are any.

The first characteristic that was isolated is "willingness". Littlewood (1996) writes that "at the core of the notion of autonomy are the learners' ability and willingness to make choices independently" (*ibid.*:427). In this context we are assuming that all learners are able to be autonomous, because of their age and education, and because being enrolled at the CLA shows already some degree of autonomy. Moreover, the more practical aspects of autonomy that are linked with the concept of ability[19] will be examined in the section of the questionnaire

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[19] According to Littlewood (1996): "Ability depends on possessing both *knowledge* about the alternatives from choices have to be made and the necessary *skills* for carrying out whatever choices seem most appropriate" (*ibid.*:428).

regarding the use of learning strategies. On the concept of willingness, we also read Bergen (1990, cited in Dam 1995:2), who states: "learner autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others". So, the learner not only needs to be able to exercise autonomy, but he also has to be willing to do so. As we saw in section 2.5, motivation and autonomy are deeply related. Whether autonomy comes first or vice versa, they are both necessary attributes for successful language learning. Therefore, the first section, "willingness", investigates whether the students are motivated and whether they feel pressured to learn English from others.

The second area that was investigated is "responsibility". To Holec (1981) the learner has to "hold the responsibility for all the decisions" (*ibid*.:3) as far as his learning is concerned. The students at CLA took on part of their responsibility when they decided to participate in the course. This research is not going to deal with how the class was taught, therefore it won't investigate whether or not the students were given power to decide objectives and materials. Nonetheless, a few questions in this section will deal with what students think about giving suggestions and opinions to the teachers. Additionally, part of the concept of responsibility overlaps with attribution theory [20]. The autonomous learner sees himself as an active participant in the process, is aware of the fact that his success on his personal effort and his active role.

Another characteristic of the autonomous learner is a strong sense of self (Breen, Mann 1997:134-135). This is the third area we chose to investigate and we called it "self-efficacy"[21] because it is a broader term, and it implies not only a strong sense of self, but also confidence in one's abilities to succeed. An autonomous learner is confident, he is not scared of taking risks and speaking the FL in front of other people. Even if he makes a mistake, his overall confidence in his abilities is not damaged and he can learn from people's feedback, whether it's the instructor or his peers. Therefore, this section includes questions about taking risks in the class, perception of errors and feedback and overall confidence outside the classroom.

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[20] See section 2.5 for an overview of the attribution theory.
[21] See section 2.5 for a definition of "self-efficacy".

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The final aspect that was investigated is "strategic learning". One of the main qualities of the autonomous learner is metacognitive awareness (Wenden 1998): he knows how he likes to learn and how he learns best, and he knows how to adapt his methods to different learning situations. Not only that, he also knows how to find materials without the guidance of the teacher. In this section the questions are quite general, there are no specific items about specific strategies or learning styles, because these are concepts that may not be clear to everyone. Section 3.5.3 will analyze more in depth all the items in the questionnaire.

It should be made clear that these four areas were chosen arbitrarily as representative of autonomy, but other researchers could choose different areas, or more aspects to investigate based on different definitions of autonomy or aspects that they find more relevant.

3.5 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

This section is going to present the questionnaire that was formulated for this study. First, the general structure will be analyzed. Then, the format of the statements will be explained, and finally the questions will be looked at in depth. The questionnaire can be seen in Appendix A.

3.5.1 Questionnaire structure

The questionnaire that was used for this research is made up of forty questions. It is almost exclusively a quantitative questionnaire as it has only one open question. Table 3 shows at a glance the seven main sections the questions belong to.

AREA	QUESTION NUMBER
BACKGROUND INFORMATION	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5
MOTIVATION	Q6
PERSONAL OPINION ON AUTONOMY	Q7, Q8
WILLINGNESS OF THE LEARNER	Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16
RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LEARNER	Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24
SELF-EFFICACY OF THE LEARNER	Q25, Q26, Q27, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q32
USE OF STRATEGIC LEARNING	Q33, Q34, Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38, Q39, Q40

Table 3 Break down of the questions into seven main sections.

The first five questions deal with the background factors [22], one asks about the motivation behind attending a language course, one is an open question asking the learners to define the "autonomous language learner", and one is a multiple choice question asking to choose one definition of autonomy out of four possible options.

A Likert scale was used to pose the 32 remaining questions. These questions were divided into four categories, or areas, which correspond to the main characteristics of the autonomous language learner (willingness, responsibility, self-efficacy, strategic learning). The questions were posed as statements, or Likert items, and the student had to indicate the level of agreement on a five-point scale. Figure 6 exemplifies how the questions were posed. Underneath the main text, the help text can be seen. In some questions it was necessary to add a few words to explain or clear doubts the respondent might have.

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[22] See research question 1 in section 3.1.

Figure 6 Example of a question.

It was decided to present the items as separate multiple choice questions, and not as a grid, due to some limitations posed by the Google Drive platform. Some statements needed to be explained with further details, and on Google Forms it is only possible to include help text in multiple choice type questions. Moreover, some of the sentences were quite long and, because it is not possible to adjust the size of the grid, the grid became unbalanced and confusing, as seen in Figure 7. The risk with having a confusing questionnaire is that the participants will not want to waste time trying to understand the questionnaire and they will not answer.

Figure 7 Example of grid: longer items do not fit well and there is no space for help text.

3.5.2 Items structure

After it was decided to present the questions as statements, one of the major decisions was to establish how the questions would be formulated.

Most of the items were formulated as positive statements, for example: "I'm worried about embarrassing myself" as opposed to "I am not worried about embarrassing myself". This is because to answer "Yes" to a negative statement, the student would have to answer with another "No" (double negation resulting in a positive answer). The more complicated the items are, the more complicated it is to decide which answer is appropriate. This could cause oversights in the answers. Simplicity was made a priority, so that the questions would be clearly understandable and the students could answer without having to struggle with the language[23].

The language overall was kept as natural as possible. Having all statements pointing to autonomy would have sounded unnatural and it might have influenced the student to answer in the way they thought they were supposed to answer, and not what they actually believed or felt. Therefore, indicating agreement with all the statements didn't necessarily point to a greater level of autonomy. The implications as far as data analysis is concerned will be made clear in section 3.6.

3.5.3 Questions analysis

This section will take a closer look at specific questions that could be controversial. The first five items pose few problems, because they ask for factual data, i.e. age, mother tongue, education, other known languages, and level of English.

Q6 asks about the motivation behind taking a course at CLA. As was said in section 2.5, for the purposes of this study it is enough to know whether the motivation was intrinsic or extrinsic. Q7 is an open question, the only one where the students can state in their own words what it means to be an "autonomous language learner" to them. The following question, Q8

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[23] It should also be pointed out that some students did not have Italian as their mother tongue. Keeping the language of the questionnaire simple was also meant to help these students.

presented four different definitions of autonomy and asked the student to indicate the one that defined the autonomous learner more precisely. This question was purposely formulated so that the learner wouldn't be completely satisfied with choosing any one option. That way he or she had to select the one that he or she thought best represented the core of his or her idea of autonomy.

Q9 through Q16 belonged to the area of willingness. Q10 requires some specification: it asks the respondents if they study English to have better grades or salary. This question could be seen as problematic, because if the answer is "Yes", then it would be impossible to know which of the two it is. In this case though, it is not important, because Q10 is designed to ascertain one more time, and in a more subtle way, whether the student is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Both the grades and salary indicate extrinsic motivation. The same reasoning applies to Q11.

Q17 to Q24 are designed to show the level of personal responsibility towards learning the language. Q17[24] investigates a typical stereotype. It is more general, because autonomy, and its defining characteristics, do not only apply to learning a language, but also to the way the learner views school in general. Most of the other items (Q18, Q20, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24) pertain to the role of the teacher within the classroom. This aspect is of particular interest as students often hold the teacher responsible for their own learning, and conversely blame the teacher when they receive bad grades or when they are bored in class. The autonomous student knows he is in charge of his own learning and does not blame the teacher. The statements at the core of Q20[25] and Q21[26] in particular are almost the same, but they are connotated in opposite ways (Q20 with the word "fail" and "guilty", Q21 with the word "duty"). Q20 sounds aggressive and it may lead to responders disagreeing with it, while Q21 is more neutral.

Q25 to Q32 deal with self-efficacy, that is to say with the confidence of the learner. Q28 and Q29 refer back to the idea of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Dörnyei 2001: 33): if the learner

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[24] "Andare bene a scuola è questione di fortuna."
[25] "Se fallisco è colpa dell'insegnante."
[26] "Farmi imparare l'inglese è un dovere dell'insegnante."

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is sure of his success in the future, and can envision himself speaking and understanding the language, he will be more likely to succeed in his learning[27].

Lastly, Q33 to Q40 investigate the use of strategies in the learning process. None of the items ask about specific strategies, but they mainly deal with the awareness of the student. An autonomous learner knows how he likes to learn (Q33), he knows how he learns best, which does not always coincide with what he likes to do (Q34). He does not panic when he realizes he doesn't know something (Q35, Q37, Q39) and he is able to self-monitor (Q38).

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The bulk of data to analyze will be the result of the 32 questions in the four main sections. It was decided to follow the same basic methodology used by Williamson (2002), which was explained in more detail in section 3.4.

Each student's responses will be summed, and the resulting number will indicate how autonomous the student is, according to an interpretation grid, similar to Williamson's. The maximum possible score is 160, while the lowest score is 32. A higher score corresponds to a higher level of autonomy in the student. Table 4 illustrates how the range is broken down into three sections. Each section corresponds to a different level of autonomy in the learner.

AUTONOMY SCORE	LEVEL OF AUTONOMY
32 – 74	**Low** – the learner needs guidance
75 – 117	**Medium** – the learner is somewhat autonomous but still needs guidance in certain respects
118 – 160	**High** – the learner is mostly autonomous and knows how to be effective in his/her learning

Table 4 Table for interpreting the autonomy score of the questionnaire respondents.

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[27] On the same subject see also Balboni 2002: 37.

All 32 questions are structured in the same way – a statement is proposed and the respondent had to choose between five options:

Completamente d'accordo	Completely agree
Abbastanza d'accordo	Agree
Neutro	Neutral
Non molto d'accordo	Disagree
Per niente d'arrcordo	Completely disagree

Table 5 Tags of Likert scale items, in Italian and English.

Even though the structure is the same, the results cannot all be coded in the same way. As was said in the previous section (3.5.2), agreeing with some statements indicates autonomy, while agreeing with others indicates lack of autonomy. Table 6 compiles a list of the former, divided by the area they appertain to.

AREA	QUESTION NUMBER
WILLINGNESS	Q9, Q12, Q14, Q16
RESPONSIBILITY	Q19, Q22, Q24
SELF-EFFICACY	Q27, Q28, Q29, Q31, Q32
STRATEGIC LEARNING	Q33, Q34, Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38

Table 6 Questions that indicate high autonomy.

For the items that reveal autonomy, the answers are coded as follows:

Completamente d'accordo	Abbastanza d'accordo	Neutro	Non molto d'accordo	Per niente d'accordo
5	4	3	2	1

Table 7 Scoring of autonomy oriented statements.

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The remaining questions are shown in Table 8. An example is Q30: "Se l'insegnante mi corregge mi sento come se avessi fallito."[28] Showing agreement with this item displays low self-confidence, thus low autonomy.

AREA	QUESTION NUMBER
WILLINGNESS	Q10, Q11, Q13, Q15
RESPONSIBILITY	Q17, Q18, Q20, Q21, Q23
SELF-EFFICACY	Q25, Q26, Q30
STRATEGIC LEARNING	Q39, Q40

Table 8 Questions that indicate low autonomy.

To score these questions, the Likert scale has to be reversed, as shown in Table 9.

Completamente d'accordo	Abbastanza d'accordo	Neutro	Non molto d'accordo	Per niente d'accordo
1	2	3	4	5

Table 9 Scoring of low autonomy statements.

The answers recorded on Google Drive are exported into an external Office Excel document and are coded and counted.

The first six questions give information about background factors, motivation and ideas on autonomy. The data extracted from them are used to cross-reference the rest of the data and find relations and patterns between the different parameters. To visualize the data, scatter plots are used. A scatter plot is a diagram that is used in statistics to highlight the relation between two different variables. One variable is objective, in our case it will be age, or English level, and so on while the other variable will depend on the answers to the questionnaires. The crossing of the two variables takes the form of a point on a Cartesian diagram, and the distribution of the points on the diagram will show a trend, if present, based on the fixed variable.

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[28] In English: "If the teacher corrects me, I feel as if I have failed."

4   Analysis and results

This chapter will deal with how the data was coded and analyzed. First the way the data was prepared to be analyzed was explained. The general traits of the population of the respondents will be presented, and the following three sections will each be dedicated to analyzing the data relevant to each research question.

4.1 Data editing and coding

As stated in the previous chapter, the data was collected through an online questionnaire and retrievable from Google Drive in the form of an Excel sheet. The program showed 47 responses. The first step was to check the answers for obvious mistakes. This process is called editing and it is necessary to eliminate unreliable results (Cohen *et al.* 2000:265).

During this step three sets of answers were eliminated. One respondent indicated his/her age to be "11", but the answer to the level of education indicated that he/she had a master's degree. Because of the conflicting nature of these statements, his/her answers were deemed unreliable and were eliminated from the results. Two more were eliminated because it was noticed that three sets of answers were identical. The time stamps of the answers, provided by Google Drive, showed that the responses were submitted on the same date at 22:17:20, at 22:17:39, and at 22:17:46. It is clear that two of the sets are the results of the participant clicking on the submit button multiple times, therefore two sets of answers were eliminated, while the original one was kept. The respondents were indicated with a letter by the program, so after the initial editing the respondents assigned letter ranged from B to ZU, with O and P missing (because those were the letters that indicated the duplicated answers, and A was the respondent who indicated age 11). It will be useful to remember that the respondents are indicated with a letter later on when we refer to specific answers.

After editing the answers, they were coded so they could be transformed into numbers or text to be analyzed. Q1, regarding age, was left as it was; Q2 requested the participant to

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write their mother tongue, so all the possible versions (italiana, ita, italiano) were coded as "Italian", while the other languages were left as they were, because there were no conflicting versions. Q3 (*livello più alto di istruzione conseguito*) and Q5 (*livello del corso del CLA*) were both coded as numbers, with 1 being the lowest level in both cases – A1.1 and middle-school diploma, 7 being a PhD and 9 being C1.2. This way the answers could be ordered according to either the education level or the level of English. Q4 (*quante lingue hai studiato*) posed a few problems because some people indicated English among the languages they studied while some did not. This issue was solved by going through the data and eliminating English from the answers. Then, the answer was coded as the number of languages the respondents answered and then adding 1 to the resulting number, as it is certain that everyone who answered studied English at the Centro Linguistico. Therefore, if a person answered "Francese, Tedesco" the resulting number would be 2+1 for English, bringing the total to 3. Q6 asked for the reason they decided to attend a course, and because the objective was to distinguish between instrumental and integrative motivation, the answers were coded as shown in Table 10. Under "Other", four people gave different answers. While they did not present particular issues, "trovo necessario sapere l'inglese per vari motivi" was coded as instrumental because it showed the idea of an external necessity to study English.

ANSWER	TYPE OF MOTIVATION
PER PASSARE UN ESAME DI LINGUA O UNA CERTIFICAZIONE (TOEFL, IELTS…)	Instrumental
PER POTERLO SCRIVERE NEL CV ED AVERE OPPORTUNITÀ DI LAVORO MIGLIORI	Instrumental
MI SERVE PER IL MIO LAVORO ATTUALE	Instrumental
VOGLIO POTER PARLARE CON PERSONE DI ALTRE NAZIONALITÀ	Integrative
VOGLIO CONOSCERE MEGLIO LA CULTURA INGLESE/AMERICANA	Integrative
VOGLIO POTER GUARDARE FILM IN LINGUA ORIGINALE / LEGGERE LIBRI IN LINGUA ORIGINALE	Integrative
ALTRO: Ripasso per trasferirmi in Inghilterra per rafforzare la mia conoscenza della lingua/ per piacere personale trovo necessario sapere l'inglese per vari motivi Per apprendere/ripassare le regole grammaticali	Instrumental Integrative Instrumental Integrative

Table 10 Coding of Q6 on motivation.

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Q7 is the open question. To see how the answers were grouped and coded, refer to Appendix B. The final question of the general section, Q8, asked for the main feature of the autonomous learner, based on the four areas explained in section 3.4.2. Therefore, the answers were coded as R for responsibility, W for willingness, E for self-efficacy, and SL for strategic learning.

The remaining 32 questions were Likert items, thus the answers were coded from 1 to 5, from weakest to strongest agreement. In general, 5 was taken as an indicator of higher autonomy, but as explained in section 3.5.2 and in section 3.6, some items were formulated so that agreeing with them showed lack of autonomy. For this reason, it was necessary to flip the coding of the questions indicated in Table 8 Questions that indicate low autonomy. This passage was done automatically by Excel. After all the answers were coded, the eight questions for each of the four areas of autonomy were summed, resulting in four separate scores for each respondent. To calculate the overall autonomy score, the four scores were simply summed.

4.2 GENERAL TRAITS OF THE RESPONDENTS

This section will present a few general data to describe the population of respondents to our questionnaire. This data represents the background factors that will be used and crossed with other data in the following sections to answer the research questions.

The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 63. 52,3% is under 30, 25% is in their 30s, 17,1% is between 40 and 49, while only 7,3% is above 60. No one falls in the range between 50 and 59 years old. Figure 8 shows their distribution, and Figure 9 illustrates the percentage for each group.
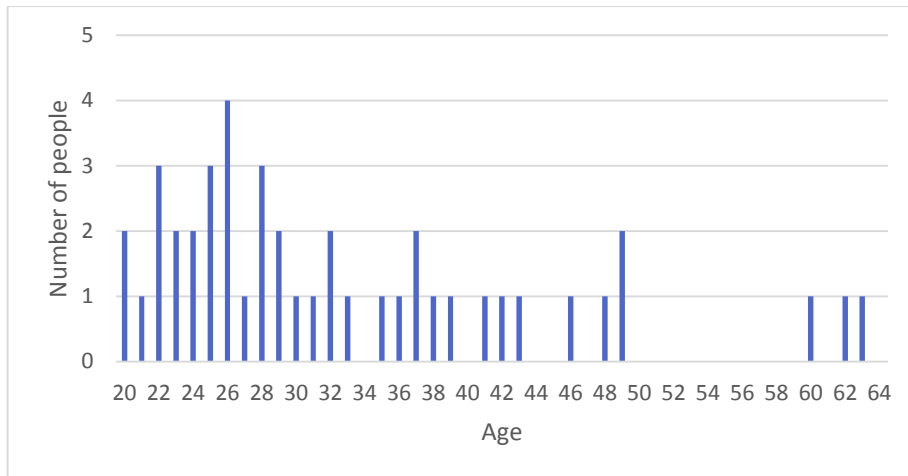
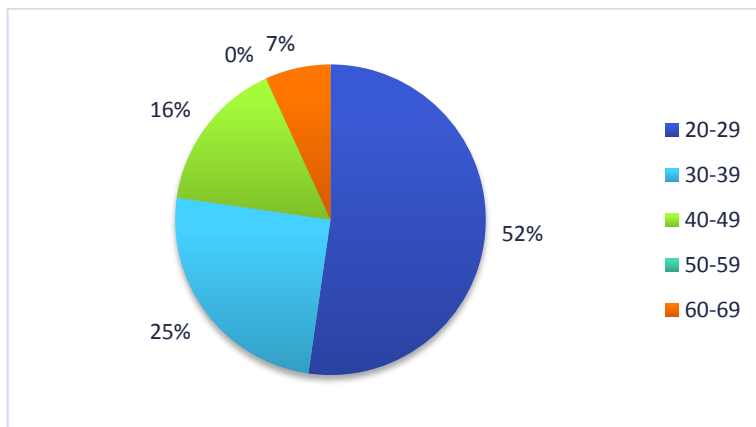*Figure 8 Ages of the participants.*

Figure 9 Participants divided by age groups.

The vast majority of the respondents (93,2%) indicated Italian as their L1, while only 3 people, or 6,8%, indicated a different mother tongue. The three languages are Turkish, Polish and Portuguese in the Brazilian variety, as shown in Figure 10.
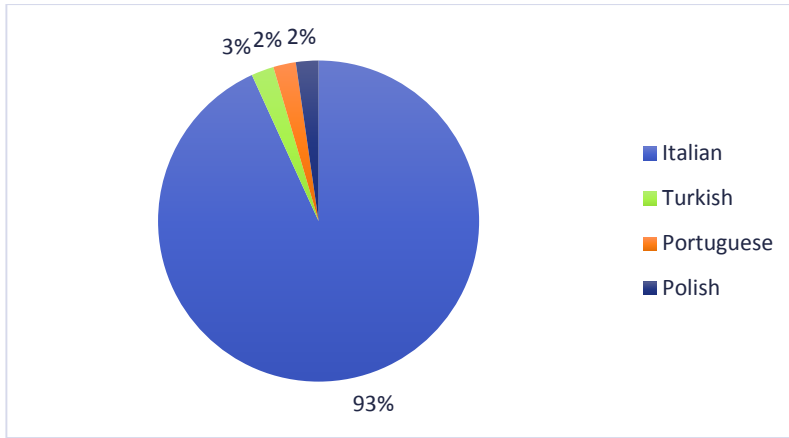
Figure 10 Distribution of the L1 of the participants.

All the respondents, except one, have at least a high school diploma. Figure 11 shows clearly that most of the population has a high school diploma, a bachelor's degree, or a master's degree. A few of the interviewees have a master, and only two people hold a PhD. This is not surprising because many of the respondents, 22%, are under 25, making this part of the population too young to have master's degree or even a bachelor's degree.
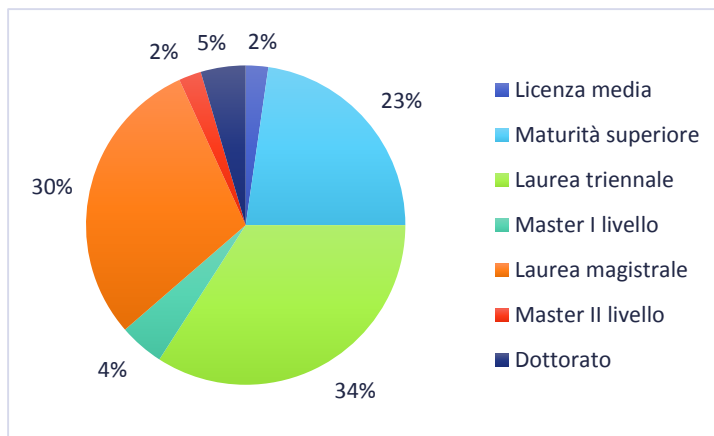
Figure 11 Highest level of education of the participants.

The vast majority of the people interviewed, 70% of the total, has studied two or three languages. 14% has studied one, another 14% has studied four, and one participant studied six languages. For the people who do not have Italian as their mother tongue, Italian counts as a foreign language studied, although it was not investigated whether Italian is an L2 or a FL to them.
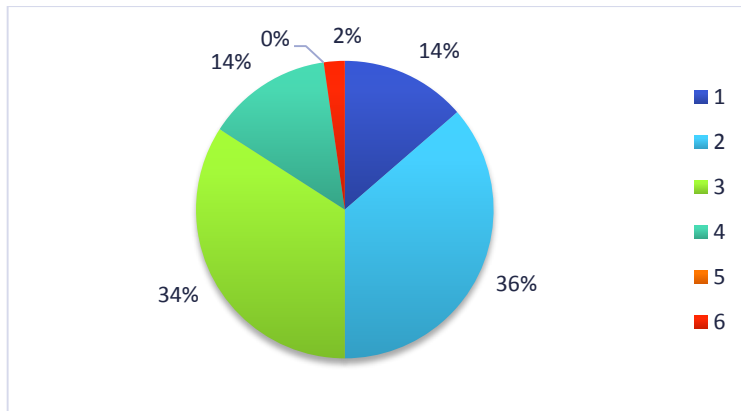
Figure 12 Number of FL studied by the participants.

Let's now look at the distribution of the respondents within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (*CEFR*). The CLA divides its classes into subgroups; level A1, for example, is divided into A1.1 and A1.2. Students must complete A1.1 before moving on to A1.2. For our purposes, it is more useful to look at A1.1 and A1.2 as one group. Figure 13 shows the level of English of the interviewees as assessed by CLA. 18% took one of the A1 courses, 7% was in the A2 level, 34% is B1 level, 32% is at B2, and 9% at C1. CLA does not offer C2 classes, therefore there could be no answers.
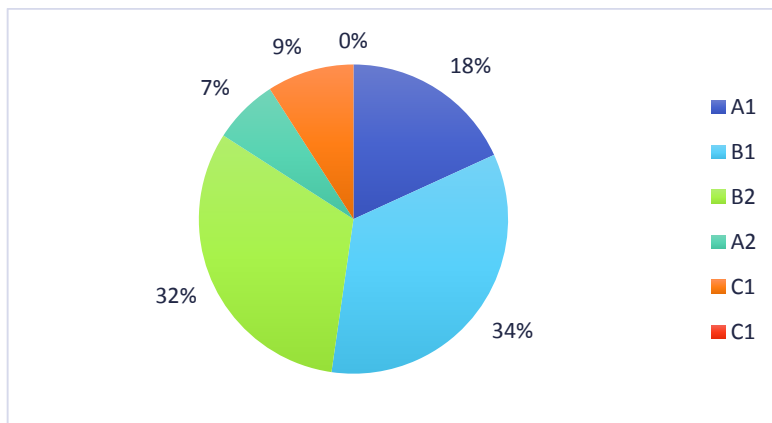
Figure 13 Distribution of the participants within the CEFR.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1

The first research question set out to investigate if any of the background factors have an influence on the level of autonomy. The background factors we took into consideration are age, mother tongue, level of education, number of FL studied in the past, and level of English. Most of the graphs used will be scatter plot, with autonomy score indicated on the vertical y axis, and the second variable on the horizontal x axis.

As far as the autonomy scores are concerned, the minimum score found in the responses is 97, while the maximum is 141. Following the guidelines given by the ranges illustrated in section 3.6, no one falls into the low autonomy category. 43% showed a medium level of autonomy, with scores between 75 and 117, while the majority of the respondents showed a high level of autonomy with scores between 118 and 160, as shown in Figure 14. It is interesting to notice that no one scored above 141, therefore there is no one that stands out as being especially autonomous. In section 4.4 we will talk more in depth about score in the single areas of autonomy, and a new range will be presented.
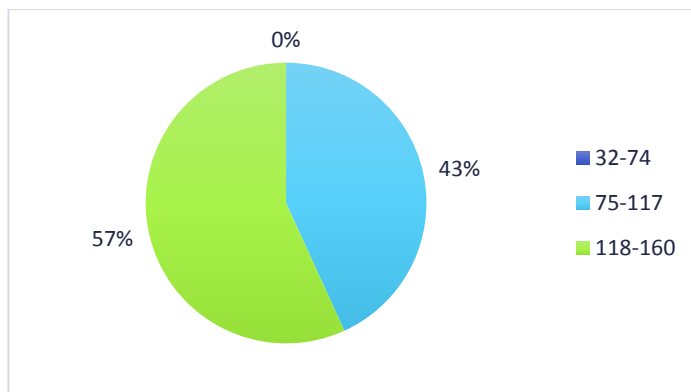

Figure 14 Levels of autonomy.

The first variable we considered for the analysis is age. As Figure 15 shows, the trend line indicates there is a slight increase in the average autonomy scores: 20 year olds score 117 on average, while people over 60 score almost reaches 127. Thanks to the scatter plot, we can observe the distribution of scores and ages on the graph. It is interesting to notice that the scores of people between 20 and 30 are much more spread out, while the scores of people

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between 30 and 40 tend to be grouped closer together. In particular a peak is evident in the scores of people around 40 years old.
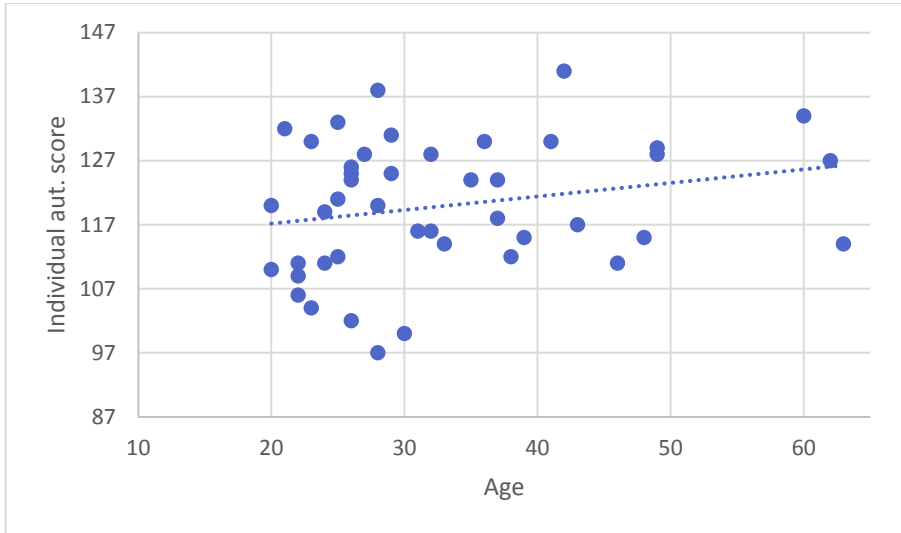

Figure 15 Relationship between age and autonomy score.

As far as L1 is concerned, there is not sufficient data to establish any trends, as only three respondents are not native speakers of Italian, therefore this aspect will not be considered. The level of education shows a slight increase as the education level increases, but this result cannot be considered very reliable as there are too many people concentrated in two categories. In Figure 16 the increase is shown by the trend line. The continuous line in the graph was added to show the median value of the three groups with most responses, which are the people with a high school diploma, a bachelor's degree, and a master's degree. Even by doing so, the upwards trend is not marked.
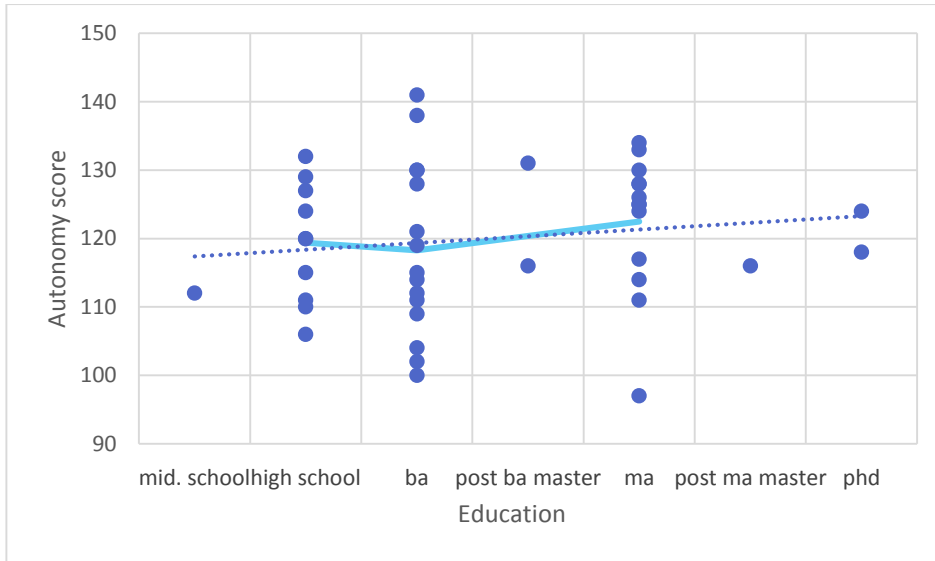
Figure 16 Relationship between level of education and autonomy score.

The graph relating number of FL studied and autonomy yielded an interesting result, and it can be seen in Figure 17. The dotted line represents the trend, while the continuous line connects the average autonomy score for each group of people. Although the autonomy scores are quite spread out, there is a definite upward trend. It is also interesting that the scores of people who studied four languages are less spread out and are all concentrated between 120 and 134.
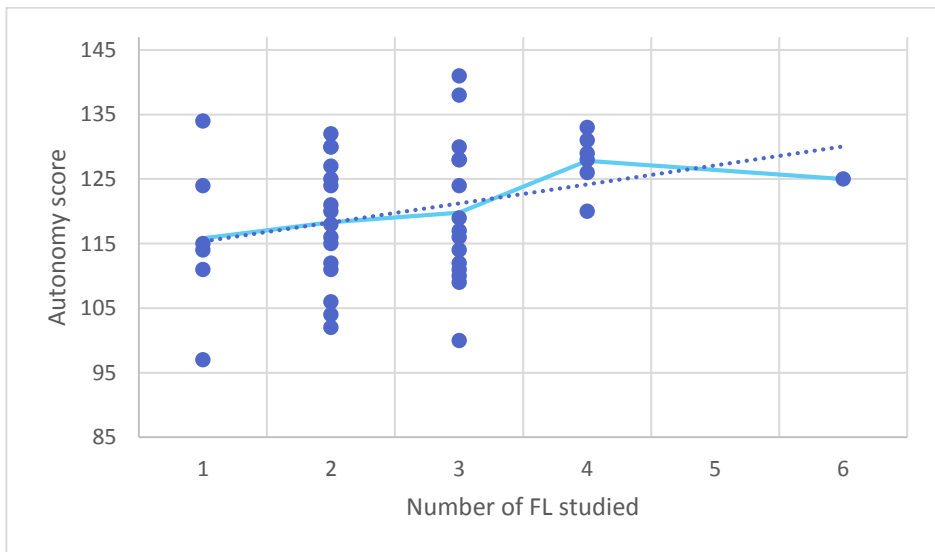

Figure 17 Relationship between number of FL studied and autonomy score.

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It was also decided to divide the responses by language studied. The options were: classical languages[29], French, German, Spanish and Italian as a FL. In the questionnaire students were given the option to write other languages they had studied but there were no other responses. The most studied language was French, with 22 people, followed by German and classical languages with 17 people each, Spanish was studied by 10 people, and Italian as a FL only by three. Italians as a FL was not considered because the number of people was too limited. The next step was to compare the average autonomy scores of the people who did study one specific languages, with the scores of those who hadn't studied it. Table 11 shows the results of the comparison: in all cases the average autonomy score is higher for the people who studied the particular language, than for those who did not study it.

	People	Avg. score	Avg. # of FL		People	Avg. score	Avg. # of FL
French				**Spanish**			
Yes	22	122,5	3,2		10	121,8	3,5
No	22	117,4	2,0		34	119,4	2,3
German				**Classical L**			
Yes	17	121,4	3,3		17	122,4	3,1
No	28	119,0	2,1		27	118,4	2,2

Table 11 Data on FL studied, average autonomy scores per language, and average number of language studied by each group.

The issue with this result is that the languages studied overlap. That is why we also calculated the number of FL studied for each group, to show that the higher average autonomy score could also be due to the fact that that specific group also studied more languages. The results are therefore not conclusive. Further studies could be conducted on controlled groups who have only studied one specific language to see whether autonomy is influenced by the student's personal history with other FL.

To analyze the scores by level of English, it was decided to group the respondents into larger groups, by uniting the results of people in A1.1 class and A1.2 class one group called A1, and so on. The graph in Figure 18 shows a slight upward trend, and there is quite a big difference between the medium score of the A1 group and the C1 group, although it should

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[29] With "classical languages" we considered both Latin and Greek, because they are taught in the same way in Italian school, using the grammar translation method.

be noted that B2 achieved a score lower than A1. This could also be due to the fact that the B2 group is very large and there is a greater variance in the results.
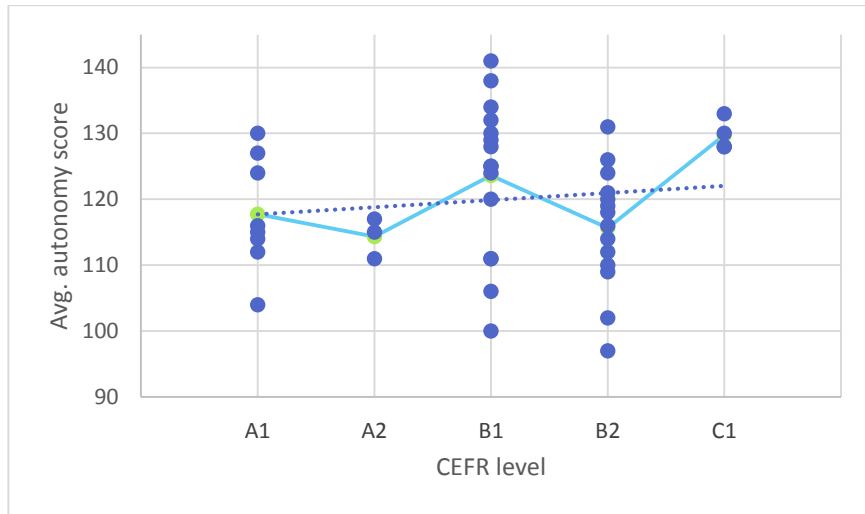

Figure 18 Relationship between CEFR level in English and autonomy score.

As was explained in section 4.1, the possible motives for taking an English class were coded as integrative or instrumental. Figure 19 shows clearly that the majority of the learners were moved by instrumental motivation.
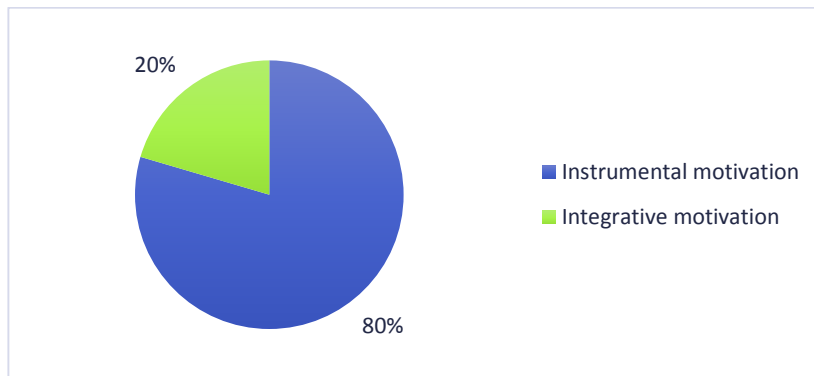

Figure 19 Distribution of motives among the respondents.

From comparing the average autonomy scores of the two groups of people, an interesting result emerged. People who showed to have instrumental motivation have an average autonomy score of 119, almost in the "medium" range of autonomy, while people who showed integrative motivation scored 124 on average. The histogram in Figure 20 illustrates this relationship.
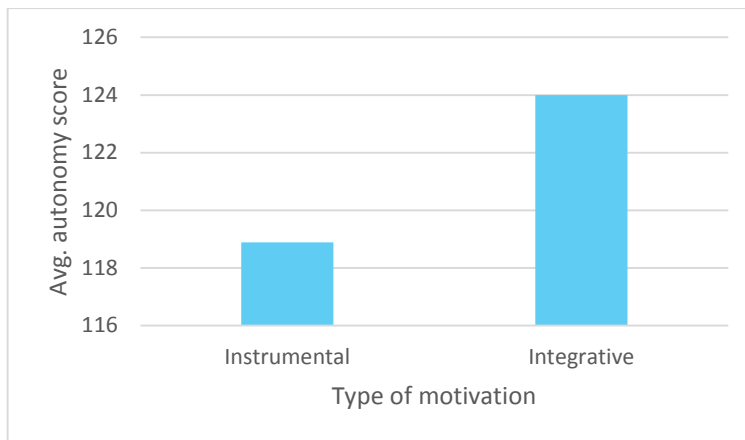
Figure 20 Relationship between the type of motivation and autonomy score.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Research question 2 aimed to investigate whether any of the areas of autonomy is weaker for all participants, and if so what the reasons could be, and if the background factors we talked about in the previous section have any influence on it.

As was said in the previous chapter, the overall autonomy score is made up of the score of each of the four areas of autonomy. Each area is investigated by eight items of the questionnaire, and because the answers are scored from 1 to 5, the lowest score per area is 8, while the highest is 40. Table 12 shows the three intervals in which the scores are divided to determine the level of autonomy in each area.

AREA SCORE	LEVEL OF AUTONOMY IN THE AREA
8 – 18	**Low** – the learner needs guidance
19 – 29	**Medium** – the learner is somewhat autonomous but still needs guidance in certain respects
30 – 40	**High** – the learner is mostly autonomous and knows how to be effective in his/her learning

Table 12 Score ranges for each area to determine the level of autonomy in each area.

On average, the scores for each area are between 29,5 in strategic learning and 30,5 in responsibility, just between medium and high autonomy.
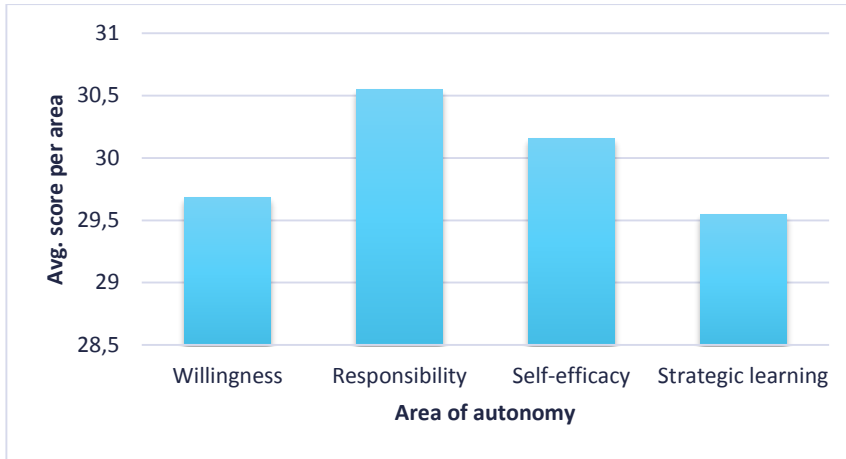
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Figure 21 Average scores for each area of autonomy.

Because looking at the entire population of participants yielded no results, it was decided to look at individual scores. For each person, the average between the four area scores was calculated, then compared with the lowest score for each individual person. The histogram in Figure 22 shows the distance between the lowest score and the average score on its x-axis, while on the y-axis it shows the frequency for each interval.
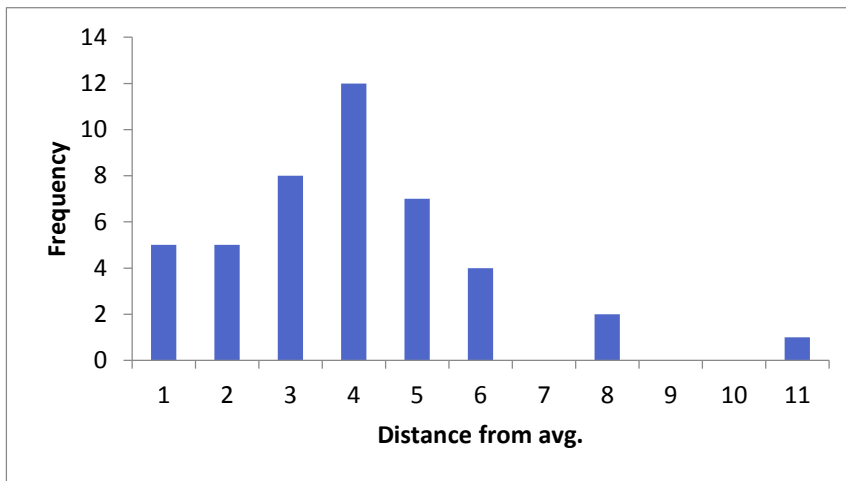

Figure 22 Distance between the average and the lowest score.

There is a definite peak in the graph. Most people (13) have one area score that is four points lower than their average. Notably two people have an eight point gap and one person has a gap of 11 points, which is very significant.

The same procedure was repeated, but this time the individual average was compared with the highest individual score. Figure 23 shows the distance between the highest score and the average score on its x-axis, while the y-axis represents the frequency.
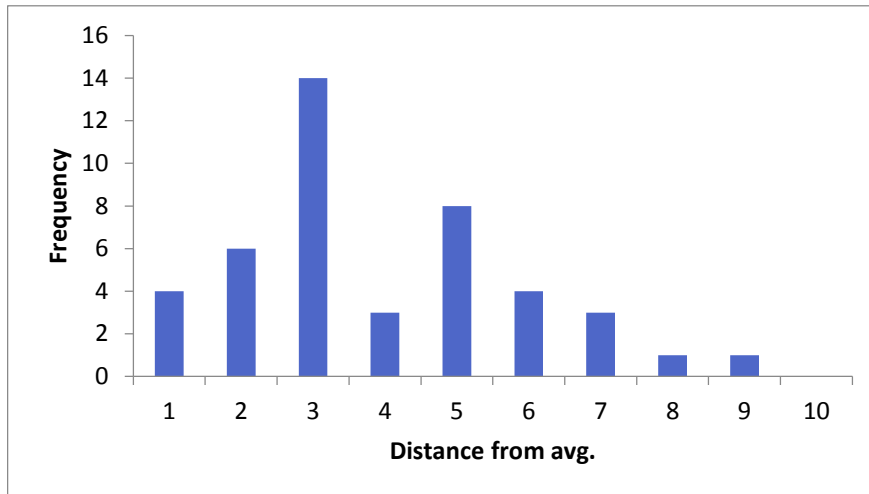

Figure 23 Distance between the average and the highest score.

Also in this case a peak can be observed: 14 people have a three-point distance between the middle point and the highest score, 8 people have a five-point distance, and 9 people have between 6 and 9 point distance.

To visualize this data, two pie charts have been created. Figure 24 shows the lowest area scores: only the scores that were at least two points lower than the average have been included. 12 people have their lowest score in willingness, 9 in responsibility, 8 in strategic learning, and 6 in self-efficacy. The lowest scores of 9 people were either too close to their average, or two areas had the same score. Overall 80% of people have one area that is weaker than their average by at least two points.
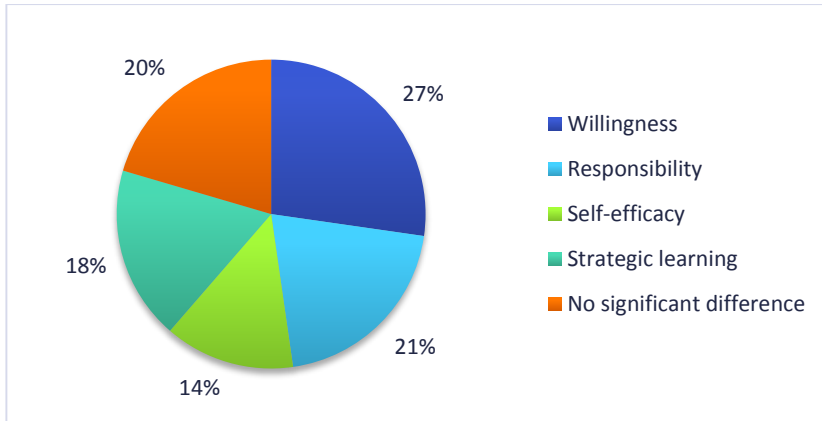
Figure 24 Lowest area score.

Figure 25 instead shows which area achieved the highest score by at least two points over the average. In this case the majority of people scored higher in self-efficacy (11 people), and responsibility (9 people). 7 people had their best score in strategic learning, and in willingness. A total of 10 people had two high scores, or a high score too close to their average. Overall, 77% of people scored higher in one area by at least two points.

Figure 25 Highest area score.
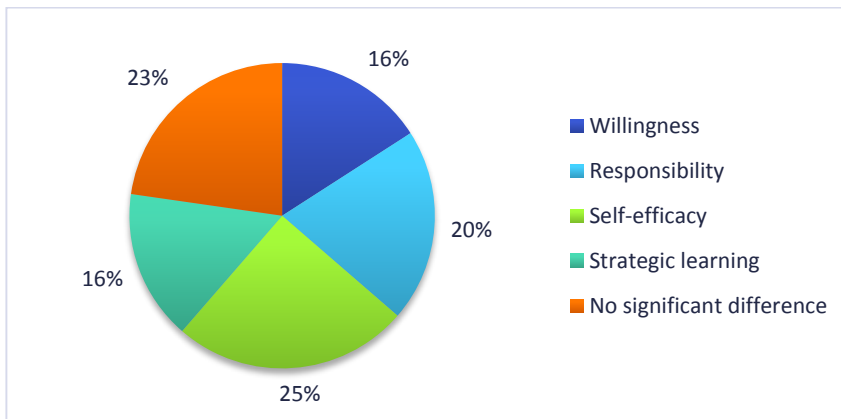
A general consideration that can be made before analyzing the rest of the data is the variance between the answers in each area, to measure how spread out individual answers are. In Table 13 are the values of the variance of each area of autonomy. Responsibility is the area where the scores are grouped closer together, while in self-efficacy the results are much more spread out.

	WILLINGNESS	RESPONSIBILITY	SELF-EFFICACY	STRATEGIC LEARNING
VARIANCE	14,8	11,6	22,4	17,0

Table 13 Variance of the scores for each area of autonomy.

The next step in analyzing the data was to compare each background factor (age, L1, level of education, other FL studied, CEFR level, motivation) with each area of autonomy. To avoid listing a long series of graphs, only the graphs showing interesting results, or that were expected to show interesting results will be presented.

The first result emerged from comparing age and willingness scores. Figure 26 shows a strong upwards trend: as age increases on the x-axis, the willingness scores also increases. This is particularly evident in the age groups of 20 to 30 year olds, with 13 people scoring underneath 30[30], whereas in the 30 to 40 age group only two people scored under 30 points.
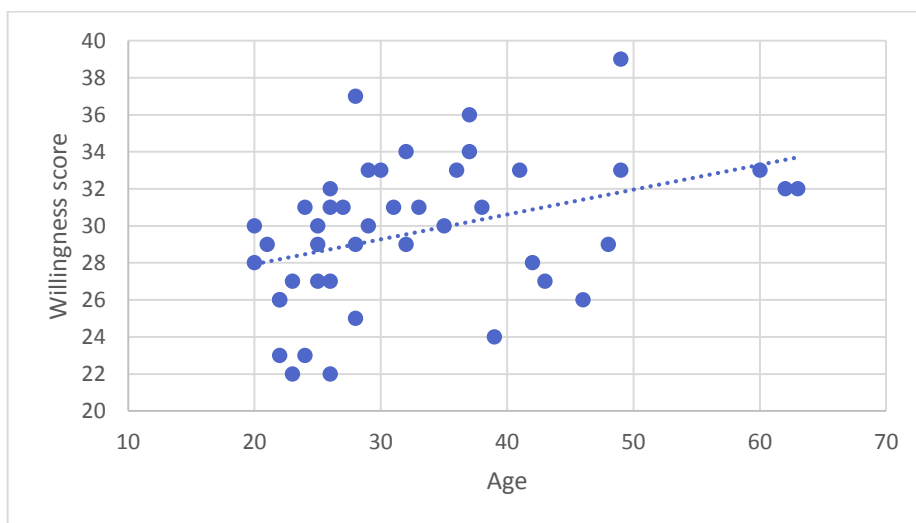

Figure 26 Relationship between age and willingness.

Age did not seem to have any influence on responsibility, self-efficacy or strategic learning. The graphs showed only slight upward trends in the cases of responsibility and strategic learning, while the self-efficacy trend line was flat.

As for research question 1, the mother tongue could not be considered as an influencing background factor, because only three people out of 44 did not have Italian as L1. The next variable that was considered was the level of education. In this case, as it happened with age,

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[30] 30 to 40 points in an area indicate high autonomy, while scores between 19 and 29 indicate medium autonomy. See Table 12 Score ranges for each area to determine the level of autonomy in each area.Table 12 for indications on how the single areas were scored.

the area that registered the most significant improvement is willingness. As Figure 27 illustrates, as the level of education becomes higher, so do the willingness scores. To make the graph more clear, the scores of people with a middle school diploma and a post MA masters have not been considered, as there was only one person in each category, and the score of one person cannot be considered representative for the whole group.
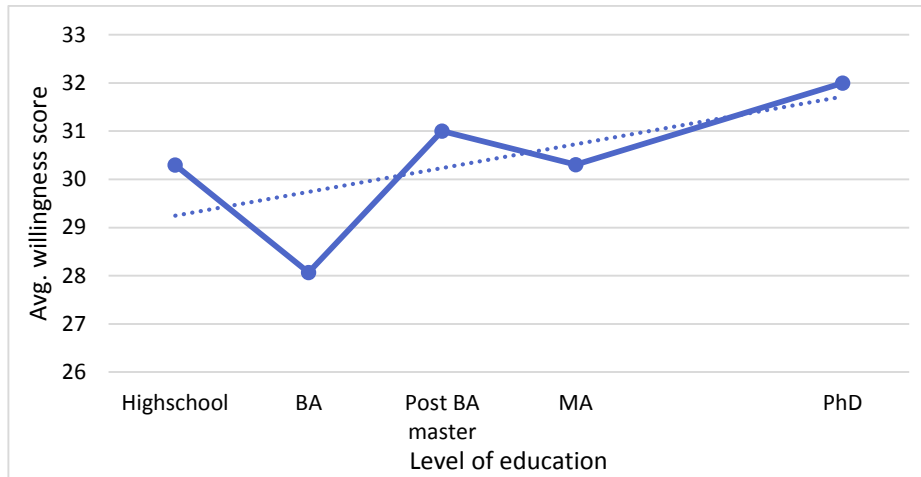
Figure 27 Relationship between level of education and willingness score.

As for responsibility and strategic learning, the data shows a mild increase, but the most surprising result comes from the crossing of the levels of education with self-efficacy. In Figure 28 a marked downward trend can be identified. In this case too, the groups of only one respondent have not been considered.

Figure 28 Relationship between level of education and self-efficacy score.

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The research hypothesis stated that people who have studied more languages were expected to have higher scores in strategic learning. While this is confirmed by a strong increase in strategic learning scores, the data also shows an increase in the other three areas, as can be seen in Figure 29. Also in this case, there was only one person who had studied six langua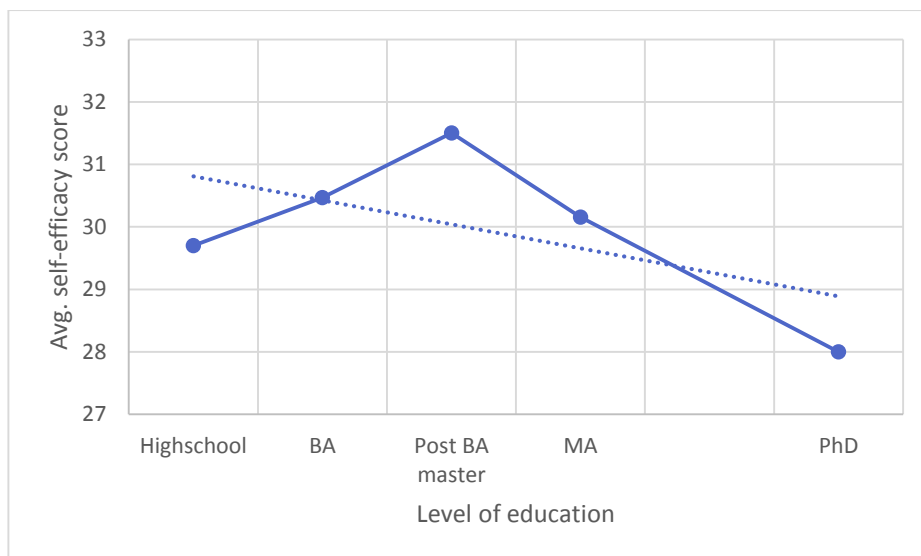ges, so his/her results were not considered, because not representative of a group. It is also interesting to observe that while there isn't much difference between those who studied two or three languages, there is a very marked increase in scores from those who only studied one language (English) to those who studied four.
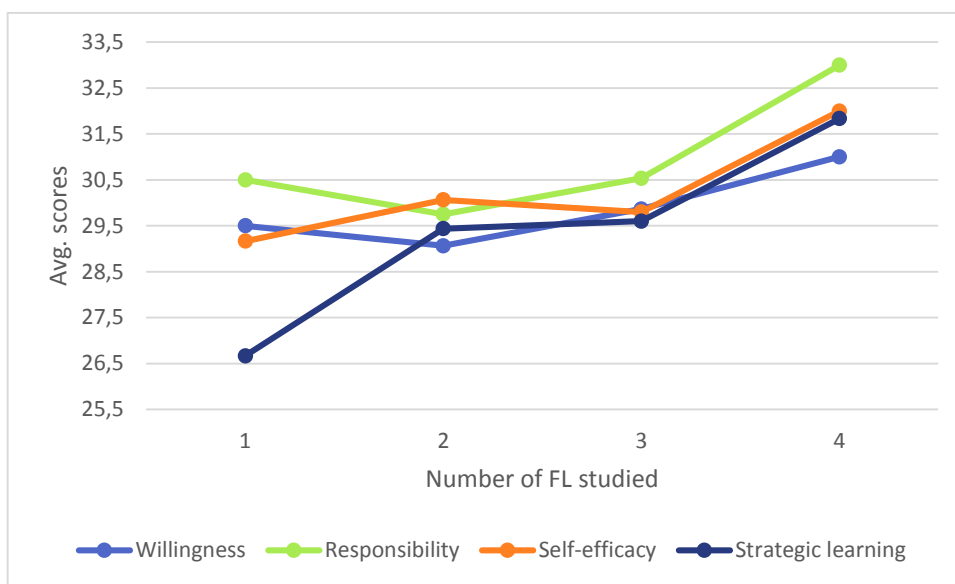
Figure 29 Relationship between number of FL studied and area scores.

The research hypothesis predicted that the scores of people who are at a higher level of English would behave similarly to those who studied more languages, but this is not confirmed by the data, as is evident in Figure 30. While the scores of people at C1 are higher than all other groups, the other groups do not show consistency. The area scores tend to be grouped close together for each of the five levels, except for a very evident rise in responsibility score for people in A2. Overall, it is hard to identify a clear trend because A2 and B2 groups scored significantly lower than A1, B1 and C1.
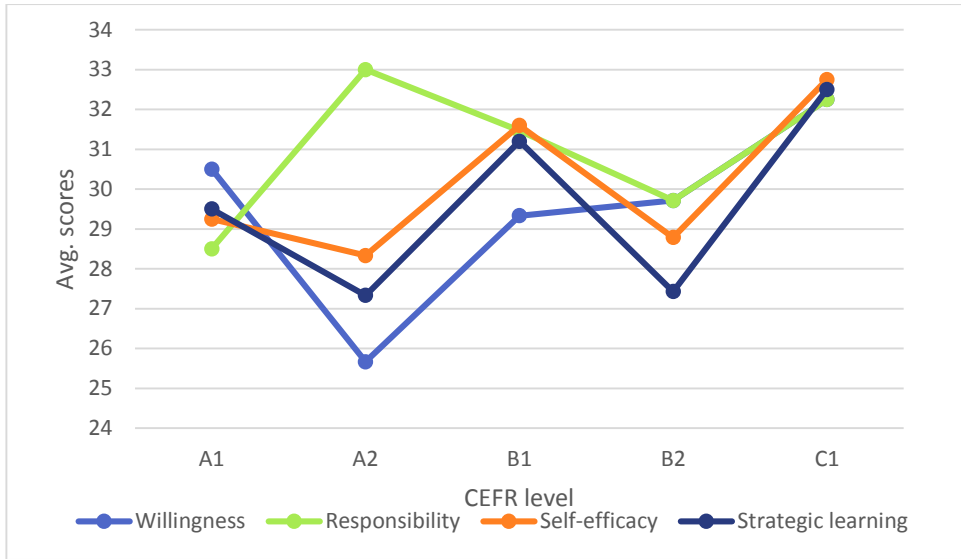
Figure 30 Relationship between CEFR level and area scores.

To analyze this data, the responses were grouped according to CEFR levels, while at the CLA classes are subdivided into two levels. Because the results were quite inconsistent, it was decided to break down the data into the levels given by the class at CLA. The resulting graph can be seen in Figure 31. While there are still inconsistencies, for most groups the results are close together, with the exception of A1.2 and A2, which show large gaps for strategic learning and responsibility.
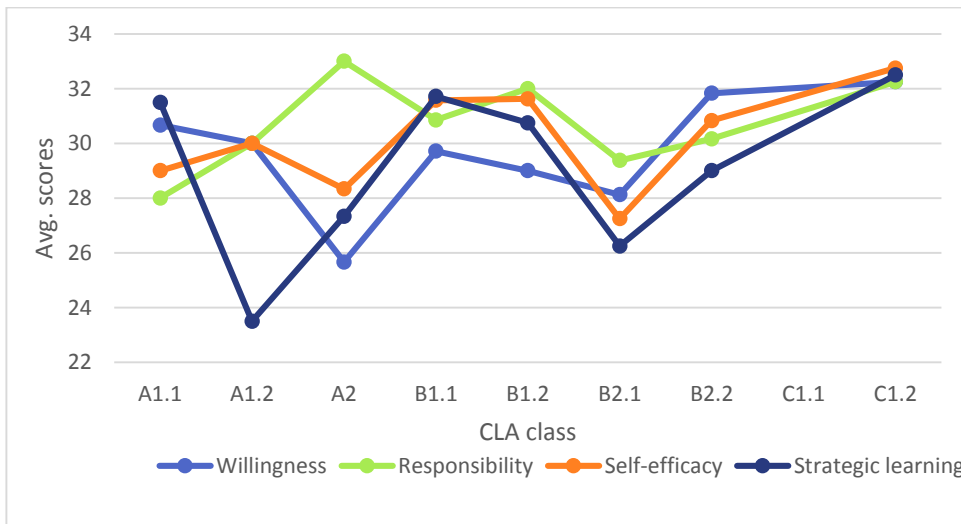
Figure 31 Relationship between class at CLA and area scores.

The final parameter that was analyzed against the four areas of autonomy is motivation. The scores of those who showed integrative motivation were compared with the scores of

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those who indicated instrumental motivation. The graph in Figure 32 shows that people with integrative motivation have higher scores in the areas of responsibility, strategic learning and especially willingness, while people with instrumental motivation scored higher in self-efficacy.
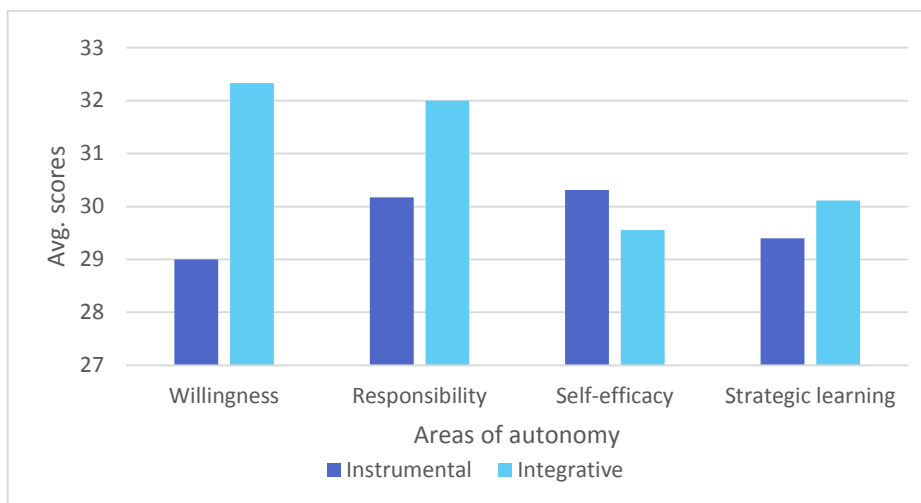
Figure 32 Relationship between types of motivation and area scores

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 3

The third and final research question set out to investigate how aware learners are on the topic of autonomy. To answer it, an open question was posed, asking the students what they think "being autonomous" means. Also, a multiple choice question asked to identify the main characteristic of autonomy, out of four options, each corresponding with one area of autonomy.

As far as the open question is concerned, the participants provided very diverse definitions of autonomy. The complete lists of answers, and how they were grouped can be seen in Appendix B. Two answers have been considered invalid, because the respondents copied one or more definitions of autonomy that were part of the following question. These answers did not provide any new information, or personal contribution on part of the respondents, therefore they were excluded from the data. Figure 33 shows how the open answers were grouped.
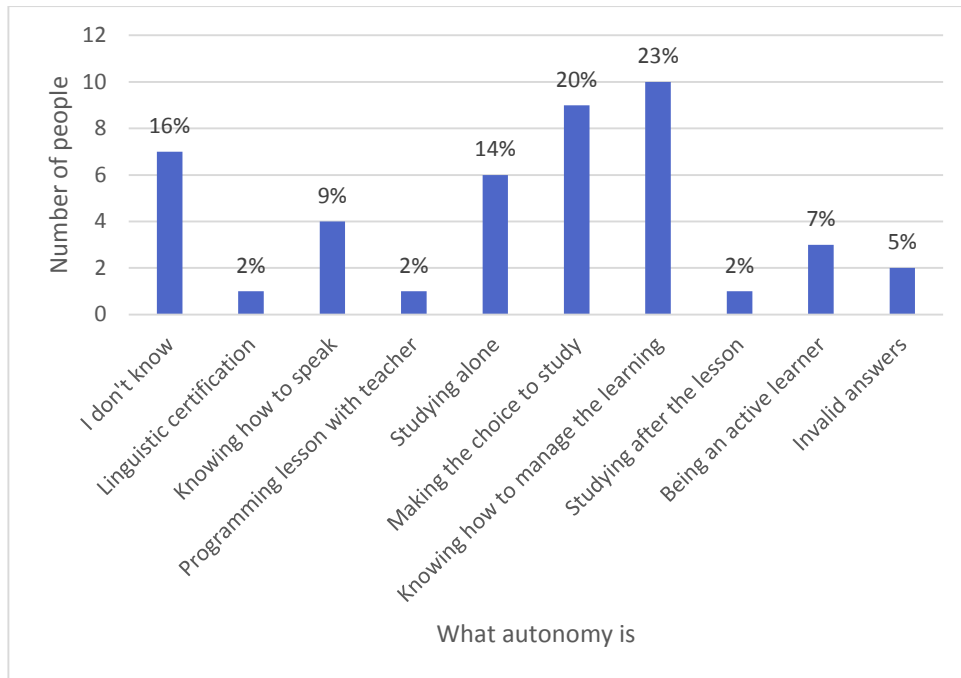
Figure 33 Responses to the open question "What does it mean to be autonomous?".

Out of the 42 answers that were considered, 19 people, or 43%, had a vague or skewed idea of what autonomy means. Of these, seven stated that they did not know what autonomy is, or that "it seems obvious". One person said that being autonomous means recognizing the importance of linguistic certifications for the future and studying to pass them. One person identified autonomy with programming the time of class with the teacher and comparing one's own materials with the teacher's. Four people wrote that autonomy is speaking another language well and being able to communicate with the people who speak the language. Lastly, six people said that autonomy means studying alone. Many of these answers contained the Italian word "arrangiarsi", which means "managing without" or "getting by", and has a negative connotation to it.

The remainder of the participants (23) gave more accurate but partial definitions of autonomy. Most of them concentrated only on one aspect. Ten people out of 20, which is 23% of the total, defined autonomy as "knowing how to manage one's learning"; among them, some concentrated on being able to find the time to study, or on self-evaluation, or on choosing to study the language without a teacher. In the appendix, the answers were divided in smaller groups, but for the sake of this analysis they were all grouped together because they

focused on the practical side of the learning process. Moreover, six answers in this group described autonomy as choosing to study a language without the teacher. These six responses were differentiated from the five responses indicated in the graph as "studying alone" because the latter included the wish to study the language, and doing it alone by choice, not out of necessity. Nine learners, or 20%, emphasized the fact that being autonomous implies choosing to study the language without it being imposed by others or by the university. One respondent believed that autonomy means studying independently alongside what is done in the classroom, adding personal research on topics that are interesting to the person. Finally three people (7%) gave what are believed to be the most accurate definitions: being autonomous means being an active learner, and making the study of the language a personalized path. One of the three wrote about being autonomous with the guidance of a teacher.

The next question that investigated the learners' knowledge of the concept of autonomy was a multiple choice question. Q8 presented the respondents with four options, each describing one attribute of the autonomous learner. The options are:

1. Lo studente autonomo è colui che sceglie di studiare la lingua straniera, senza essere obbligato da altri (*willingness*)

2. Lo studente autonomo è responsabile e si fa carico del proprio apprendimento della lingua straniera (*responsibility*)

3. Lo studente autonomo è sicuro di sé e sa che può raggiungere i suoi obiettivi (*self-efficacy*)

4. Lo studente autonomo è in grado di organizzare il proprio studio, sa come gli piace imparare ed è in grado di auto-monitorarsi (*strategic learning*)

Figure 34 illustrates the results. Almost half of the respondents, 48%, identified autonomy with strategic learning. 29% answered willingness, and 23% responsibility. The really interesting thing, is that no one out of 44 people identified autonomy with self-efficacy.

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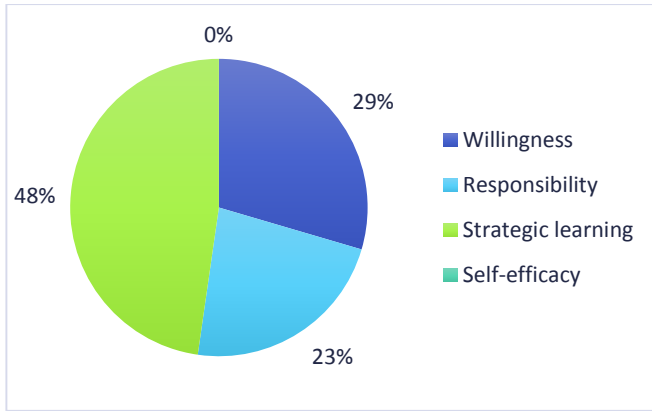
Figure 34 Distribution of the answers to Q8.

The next step will be to analyze this data, relative to people's perception of autonomy, in relation with their overall autonomy scores and area scores to investigate whether there is any correlation. As Figure 35 shows, those who identified autonomy with responsibility scored higher on average than those who identified it with willingness and especially with strategic learning.

Figure 35 Relationship between answer to Q8 and average autonomy score.

As far as single area scores are concerned, Figure 36 sums up the data. On the x-axis are the four areas of autonomy, and on the y-axis the average scores. The four colors represent the areas that people believe to be most representative of autonomy. It can be seen at a glance that one color does not appear in the chart, as no one choose self-efficacy.
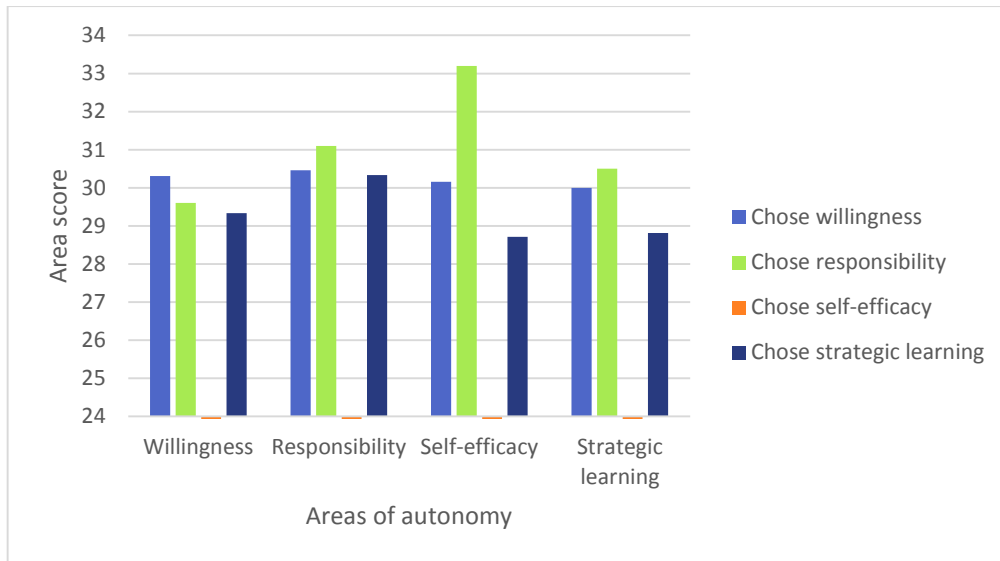
Figure 36 Single area scores according to the answer to Q8.

Those who chose willingness as the most representative characteristics of autonomy achieved almost the same scores in all areas, those who chose responsibility got a decidedly higher score in self-efficacy. Those who chose strategic learning had the lowest overall score of all (as seen in Figure 35) had their highest score in responsibility and their lowest in self-efficacy.

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5   D<small>ISCUSSION OF THE</small> R<small>ESULTS</small>

This chapter will discuss the main findings that emerged from the data analysis illustrated in chapter 4. Then, some observations on individual questionnaire questions will be presented, and the final section will deal with issues and problems that were encountered during this research project, as well as a few starting points for further research.

5.1   D<small>ISCUSSION OF THE</small> R<small>ESULTS</small>

The first research question set out to investigate whether autonomy is influenced by any of the background factors we considered. The answer to this question is that some factors do influence autonomy, while others do not: age, level of education and level of English did not appear to have a significant influence on the level of autonomy, while not enough data was collected to make determinations about the L1. The factors that did influence autonomy in our study group are the number of FL studied, and the type of motivation.

Initially it was hypothesized that all these factors would influence autonomy, but it was only confirmed for two of them. Studying different languages in a formal setting, results in exposure to different teachers, different methods, and increasing one's confidence with materials and procedures in general. If the learner approached the language independently, this shows a high degree of self-determination and autonomy. Whichever the situation, our data shows that studying more languages does lead to a higher degree of autonomy. It was also hypothesized that people with integrative motivation would be more autonomous than those with instrumental motivation. This was confirmed by the data, although it should be noted that Breen and Mann (1997) state that one of the qualities of the autonomous language learner[31] is "the desire to learn" (*ibid*.:134): as long as there is a desire to learn the language,

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[31] For a complete list of the qualities of the autonomous language learner by Breen and Mann (1997), see section 2.2 The autonomous language learner.

it does not matter why they want to learn it, as long as it is an intrinsic desire. In our case study, integrative motives seem to have a positive effect on autonomy.

Age, however, did not seem to influence autonomy, and this was surprising because it was speculated that maturity would correspond with higher self-confidence and self-consciousness. Nonetheless, this finding can be seen as consistent with Nunan's (1997) statement that autonomy is not constant over time, and it is normal for learners to move from one level of autonomy to another.

The second research question concerned the different areas of autonomy and whether or not they were also influenced by the background factors. From the data it emerged that most learners showed to have one area that is stronger or weaker than the others. This had been predicted in the research hypotheses, and this finding is consistent with the fact that autonomy is a broad concept, made up of many elements[32] and therefore very different scores from the same person are to be expected. However, across all participants, there is not one area of autonomy that is stronger, or weaker, than the others. This confirms the prediction made in the research hypothesis, that scores would be consistent across the population. This is probably because, even though individual scores are different, overall the high scores and low scores tend to cancel each other out, resulting in a fairly balanced situation.

As regards the influencing factors, the willingness of the learners showed to be positively influenced by age and level of education. The questions in the willingness section of the questionnaire were mostly concerned with whether the student felt external pressure in studying English, and on seeing the language course as part of a personal path towards learning the FL. It can then be speculated that older people achieved higher scores because they feel fewer constraints than younger people from external factors, be they university, or work, since being older usually corresponds with a more solid career and more certainty in life in general. The increase in willingness as the level of education increases could be linked to being more comfortable with studying independently and pursuing one's own interests for the sake of learning, not just to achieve better grades.

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[32] Refer to chapter 2, and in particular section 2.5 Autonomy, motivation and other psychological variables.

As it happened with the general autonomy score, the number of FL studied had a positive effect on all four areas of autonomy, confirming an initial hypothesis. Different strategies are required to deal with issues one might have while studying the language, and learners might have also had more exposure to different teaching techniques and methodologies. Unfortunately it could not be determined from our data if specific languages had more or less influence on a specific area, but it could be an interesting starting point for further research.

Neither responsibility[33] nor strategic learning were strongly affected by any of the factors we considered. The results emerging from the self-efficacy section seem to be the most unpredictable ones. Integrative motivation determined better scores in all areas, except self-efficacy, while a strong decrease was registered when cross-referenced with level of education. These results are rather surprising and the great variance can be explained because the questions on self-efficacy regarded personality factors like self-confidence and self-assurance, and they are the ones that are least likely to be influenced by external factors.

The third research question proposed to investigate the learners' ideas and perceptions on autonomy, and see whether a higher degree of awareness corresponded with higher autonomy, in single areas or overall.

The open question yielded a very interesting result: almost half of the respondents did not know what autonomy is. As expected, six learners answered that autonomy means managing alone without the help of a teacher. Confusing autonomy with self-instruction is one of the most common misconceptions about autonomy (Little 1991:3-4), as illustrated in section 2.1.1. Other answers were very surprising: four people stated that being autonomous means being able to communicate well in the FL. One student identified autonomy as deciding with the teacher on the time of the lesson, and comparing one's own materials with those proposed by the teacher, while another student wrote that being autonomous means recognizing the importance of linguistic certifications and studying to pass them. These answers stand out because they don't refer to any specific misconception about autonomy, but reflect the learners' convictions on a topic they know little about. Overall, we did not expect to have so

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[33] See section 5.3 for some considerations on the questions on responsibility.

many misguided answers, as all participants are educated adults, who are also attending a language course.

The remaining of the answers were more accurate, but almost all of them overlooked some features of autonomy. Most of the respondent identified autonomy with practical aspects connected to the learning process, such as deciding to study the language and managing one's learning. Many also confused autonomy with self-instruction, but they also underlined the personal choice and motivation behind studying a FL. Three respondents gave correct and complete answers. These results confirm the initial hypothesis that learners do not know or do not have a clear idea of what being autonomous entails, and this is significant because from the data it emerged that everyone is autonomous to some degree, but almost no one is aware of this.

When the students had to identify the most characteristic feature of autonomy among four descriptive sentences, no one, out of 44 people, deemed self-efficacy to be the fundamental feature of autonomy. This could be due to the fact that the participants had to choose just one characteristic, and they believed the other three statements to be more descriptive and more representative of autonomy than the one describing self-efficacy. It is also consistent with the answers to the open question, as the learners seem to identify autonomy with the more practical features, the ones regarding time management, abilities and skills, while the psychological aspects relating to self-confidence and idea of self was not mentioned by anyone.

Moreover, the answer to this question was expected to correspond to a higher score in the area of autonomy that was chosen as most representative, but this was not confirmed by the data. The hypothesis was based on the assumption that choosing a particular area would correspond with a higher score in that area due to a higher level of awareness. This shows a general lack of awareness on part of the students. To make sure these results were true for everyone, we looked at the individual autonomy scores of the three people who gave good definitions of autonomy: their total scores were 131, 128 and 120, far from the maximum score of 160 and well within the average of the pool of participants. Therefore, for the groups of

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students examined, their theoretical beliefs are not matched by their behavior and by their practice.

This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Menegale (2011)[34]. The learners of our study are for the most part the result of the Italian education system investigated by Menegale, therefore it is not surprising that non-autonomous teenagers grow up to be non-autonomous adults. In particular, the subjects of our study did show signs of autonomy, including having signed up for a course, but they lack awareness of what it means to be autonomous and what the implications are for them as learners. As was said in section 2.4.1 metacognitive awareness is a fundamental element to develop as a learner, being able to experiment with different methods and deciding the one that works best for oneself (Wenden 1998).

To summarize what was said above, the main findings are as follows:

- Studying more languages and having integrative motivation are beneficial to autonomy;

- Learners are not equally autonomous in all areas;

- Learners are not aware of what autonomy is and what it means to be autonomous;

- Learners tend to think of autonomy only in its practical aspects, and they identify autonomy with strategic learning.

The main practical implication for these results is that autonomy should be talked about and fostered in schools. Starting a path towards autonomy early in the school life of a person would be very beneficial to learners during their school years, as well as later in life as adults. As it was said in section 2.4, fostering autonomy does bring benefits to learners: they become active participants in their learning, they are more efficient and more motivated, and they are more likely to use the language outside the formal setting, which is fundamental to learn to

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[34] Menegale (2011) conducted a research on Italian students who attended middle school and high school, and on their teachers. She found that the students were not autonomous, as they did not think that they could manage their learning and did not take up an active role in it. From the teachers' questionnaires, it emerged that although the teachers recognized the importance of fostering autonomy, they did not follow a consistent program and when they tried to propose activities aimed at fostering autonomy, they did so without explaining their goal to the classroom. Therefore, the students are not aware of what it means to be autonomous and do not know how to take charge of their learning.

communicate in the FL (Little 2003). Students need guidance in learning how to make objectives for themselves and in learning how to be autonomous overall, but this is not enough. The open answers show that the psychological factors related to autonomy are not considered at all. All their answered focused on managing the learning and choosing to study a language, but no one talked about motivation, self-realization, and self-confidence. It is therefore important that these aspects are also talked about in the classroom, because learning a language is a complex path, and the learner has to be ready psychologically to take on the challenges and not give up.

5.2 OBSERVATIONS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

This section will present the results of some specific items in the questionnaire. They are not directly related to the research questions, but they do give insights as to students' perception of language education.

The answers to question Q15 "Ho scelto di frequentare un corso perché non mi andava di studiare da solo/a a casa[35]" give us an insight on the perception students have of language courses. 57% of them agreed with this statement: this means that the majority of learners feel that they do not trust themselves with self-directing their learning at home, and they prefer to be held accountable by a third party, in this case CLA. Nonetheless, almost everyone agreed with the statement of Q16 "Ho scelto di frequentare un corso per integrare il mio percorso personale di studio[36]", showing a degree of consciousness about the role of the language course in their learning. This is an interesting contrast: while the learners see the course as an obligation, they are also aware of the importance of having a larger perspective on their learning of the FL.

The questionnaire contrained a series of questions that deal with responsibility of the teacher and of the learner. Those are Q18, Q19, Q20, and Q21, and their answers are summed up in Table 14.

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[35] "I decided to attend a course because I didn't feel like studying alone at home."
[36] "I decided to attend a course as a part of my personal path in learning English."

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QUESTION	LOW AUTONOMY	MEDIUM	HIGH AUTONOMY
Q18 - SE MIGLIORO IN INGLESE, VUOL DIRE CHE L'INSEGNANTE È BRAVO/A.	64%	23%	14%
Q19 - SE MIGLIORO IN INGLESE, È PERCHÉ MI IMPEGNO.	0%	0%	100%
Q20 - SE FALLISCO È COLPA DELL'INSEGNANTE.	7%	20%	73%
Q21 - FARMI IMPARARE L'INGLESE È UN DOVERE DELL'INSEGNANTE.	23%	29%	48%

Table 14 Answers to Q18, Q19, Q20, and Q21, divided by level of autonomy shown.

It can be seen that Q18 and Q19 deal with the same topic, which is attribution of success. Everyone agreed that personal effort leads to better results in the FL, but what is surprising is that the teacher is also invested with a great deal of responsibility for the learning outcome. More than half the people agree that if the teacher is "good" they become better at English. This is interesting because "a good teacher" is someone who keeps the class engaged and motivated, leading to better results from the students, but what the students don't realize is that they put in more effort when they are motivated; they do the learning, not the teacher. It should also be noted that the ages in this group of respondents are varied, showing that giving responsibility to the teacher is a common misconception across the population, that does not change with age. Q20 and Q21 deal with the same topic but are more negatively connotated than Q18 and Q19, with words like "blame" and "obligation". Nonetheless, 7% of learners do blame the teacher for their failures, and 23% believe that it is the duty of the teacher to make them learn the FL. This is very significant, as again, the responsibility for the learning is shifted onto the teacher.

Q22 and Q23 asked about the possibility of students giving suggestions and disagreeing with the teacher, and most of the participants found that these were acceptable actions. In the area of strategic learning, a surprising number of learners, 41%, stated that they use the same methods to study everything. This shows lack of awareness and the need for guidance to learn to "study a language".

From looking at these questions and their answers we can make a few considerations. The answers are consistent with the picture that was painted by the rest of the data: the learners are not aware of what autonomy entails, and they are not as active in their learning

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as they could be. Moreover, learners hold the teacher responsible for their own learning. This is a very common misconception, that needs to be addressed in the classroom, starting at a very young age. Being autonomous means being active in the learning process, and this can only be done by the learner himself. The teacher can be an important reference and provider of guidance but cannot "teach the language". A student can only be autonomous when he realizes that he is in charge of his learning, not the teacher; his own effort is essential to a positive learning outcome.

5.3 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

During the course of this study, some aspects emerged that limit the validity of the data, as well as some issues related to the questionnaire that could be modified to unearth further revelations in future research.

The main limitation is the small number of participants who answered the questionnaire. Out of all the students of English as CLA, only 44 submitted their answers, giving this research a limited scope, valid only for the people who took part in it, although the findings can be generalized to a certain extent. Also, the people who attend the CLA are for the most part enrolled in Ca' Foscari, making the group largely heterogeneous but also unbalanced, especially with regards to age and education, as most of them were in their early 20s.

As regards the issues with the questionnaires, two main limitations can be identified. The first is that during its preparation, it was decided to keep it quite short, to encourage more people to take part in it. Unfortunately this meant that some aspects had to be overlooked or eliminated: the main ones are the type of education, the country in which the majority of schooling was completed, aspects regarding intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, and more areas of autonomy[37]. This was also done because we anticipated that the number of participants would be limited and an excessive amount of detail could lead to very small groups of people with the same characteristics – too small to have any statistical significance. In further research

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[37] As said in section 3.4.2, the decision to limit the areas of autonomy to four was arbitrary. A more detailed research project could elect to investigate more and different aspects.

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it could be interesting to compare autonomy scores of people at university studying languages, sciences or humanities, to see whether higher education has an influence of autonomy. Also, with a much larger and more controlled sample group, it could be investigated whether different education systems in different countries has different outcomes in its learners and their autonomy.

The second issue with the questionnaire is found in the section regarding responsibility. In particular, the items summarized in Table 14 did not work well together. Because they essentially ask about the same topic (teacher responsibility), but have opposite connotations, most students tended to disagree with the negative sentences, while they agreed with the others. This way, the scores for each question cancelled each other out, giving unreliable results. This became evident when the responsibility scores were cross-referenced with the background factors, and no conclusive data could be extracted. Nonetheless, the answers to those items did reveal interesting data as far as students' attitudes and beliefs, as was highlighted in section 5.2.

This problem could probably have been avoided had there been more time and more volunteers to test the questionnaire on, before submitting it to the larger group of participants. Future researches would have to amend this section, making sure the questions are not in contrast with each other.

6   CONCLUSION

This research set out to investigate autonomy, the factors that influence it and the awareness of learners on the topic. The three initial research questions were:

1. Which factors influence autonomy?
2. Are learners equally strong in all areas of autonomy?
3. What area do learners perceive as the most representative of autonomy?

To answer them, we submitted a questionnaire to the students of English at CLA. The questions were divided into four areas, corresponding with the four areas of autonomy, so that we could investigate the different areas separately, and compare them with each other and with the background factors.

The answers to the research questions can be summarized as follows:

1. Having studied more FL and being moved by integrative motivation have a positive influence on autonomy;
2. Learners are not equally strong in all areas of autonomy;
3. Learners identify autonomy with strategic learning.

The data also yielded other interesting results, that are outside the initial questions. The three main issues that emerged from the data are:

- Learners lack awareness about autonomy and what it entails;
- Learners lack awareness on the psychological aspects related to autonomy;
- Learners hold the teacher responsible for their learning.

All in all, the picture that emerges from the data that was gathered is consisted with what was said in the Introduction about the Italian school system, and what was also found by Menegale (2011). The Italian school system does not foster autonomy consistently. It should be noted that all the learners who answered did show a degree of autonomy, but what they lack is awareness. They were confused about the concept of autonomy, and they appeared to think that autonomy is only made up of practical features in language learning, detached from the psychological dimension. Unrelated to autonomy, many also held the teacher responsible for their learning.

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The practical implications are evident: students' autonomy has to be fostered from a very young age. Becoming an active learner would enable students to feel more empowered, more confident and in charge of their learning. In section 2.2, we briefly presented a study conducted by Maftoon, Daftarifard and Lavasani (2011): they found that the most successful language learners were also the most autonomous ones, which shows a correlation between autonomy and positive learning outcomes. The idea that the teacher is responsible for the student's learning is not only misconceived, but also hurtful for the development of the student. The autonomous learner knows the teacher is a guide; he has to work to achieve good results, and can therefore realize himself to his full potential.

This is not only true for language education but all fields of knowledge. Unfortunately the majority of adults does not have the chance to attend classes when they finish their education. Therefore, it is important to be taught to be autonomous, so that adults can also keep learning independently, and become life-long learners.

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Studiare l'inglese

Il questionario che stai per completare riguarda il tuo rapporto con lo studio della lingua inglese.
I dati raccolti mi aiuteranno nella stesura della tesi. Non è un test, non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate e non verranno espressi giudizi su nessuno.
Inoltre i dati vengono raccolti anonimamente e saranno utilizzati solo ed esclusivamente ai fini di ricerca.
Potrai quindi rispondere tranquillamente ed onestamente.

Grazie infinite per il tuo aiuto!
Lavinia

Informazioni generali

Quanti anni hai? *

Qual è la tua lingua madre? *

Qual è il livello più alto di istruzione che hai conseguito? *
Se hai studiato in un paese straniero, indica il titolo equivalente.

○ Licenzia media
○ Maturità superiore
○ Laurea triennale
○ Laurea magistrale o vecchio ordinamento
○ Other:

Quali lingue hai studiato in passato? *
☐ Italiano come lingua straniera
☐ Francese
☐ Tedesco
☐ Spagnolo
☐ Lingue classiche (latino e/o greco)
☐ Other:

Qual è l'ultimo corso che hai frequentato presso il CLA? *
O A1.1
O A1.2
O A2
O B1.1
O B1.2
O B2.1
O B2.2
O C1.1
O C1.2

Per quale motivo hai deciso di seguire un corso di inglese? *
Indicare solo il motivo principale

O Per passare un esame di lingua o una certificazione (Toefl, Ielts...)
O Per poterlo scrivere nel CV ed avere opportunità di lavoro migliori
O Mi serve per il mio lavoro attuale
O Voglio poter parlare con persone di altre nazionalità
O Voglio conoscere meglio la cultura inglese/americana
O Voglio poter guardare film in lingua originale / leggere libri in lingua originale

O Other: [   ]

Secondo te, cosa significa essere uno "studente autonomo" nell'ambito delle lingue straniere? *

Secondo te, tra queste qual è la caratteristica principale che uno studente deve avere per essere definito autonomo? *
Tutte e quattro le definizioni sono corrette, pensa a cosa vuol dire per te "autonomia".

O Lo studente autonomo è colui che sceglie di studiare la lingua straniera, senza essere obbligato da altri
O Lo studente autonomo è responsabile e si fa carico del proprio apprendimento della lingua straniera
O Lo studente autonomo è sicuro di sé e sa che può raggiungere i suoi obiettivi
O Lo studente autonomo è in grado di organizzare il proprio studio, sa come gli piace imparare ed è in grado di auto-monitorarsi

Che rapporto hai con la lingua inglese?

Di seguito ti saranno proposte una serie di affermazioni. Per ognuna indica se sei d'accordo o meno. Non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate, rispondi in base alle tue opinioni e alle tue esperienze.

Mi sento motivato ad imparare l'inglese. *
- ⭕ Completamente d'accordo
- ⭕ Abbastanza d'accordo
- ⭕ Neutro
- ⭕ Non molto d'accordo
- ⭕ Per niente d'accordo

Frequento un corso di inglese per avere voti o un salario migliori. *
- ⭕ Completamente d'accordo
- ⭕ Abbastanza d'accordo
- ⭕ Neutro
- ⭕ Non molto d'accordo
- ⭕ Per niente d'accordo

Studio di più per far piacere all'insegnante / ai miei genitori / al mio datore di lavoro. *
- ⭕ Completamente d'accordo
- ⭕ Abbastanza d'accordo
- ⭕ Neutro
- ⭕ Non molto d'accordo
- ⭕ Per niente d'accordo

Studiare l'inglese è interessante per me. *
- ⭕ Completamente d'accordo
- ⭕ Abbastanza d'accordo
- ⭕ Neutro
- ⭕ Non molto d'accordo
- ⭕ Per niente d'accordo

Mi sento obbligato/a a studiare l'inglese. *
L'obbligo può venire da persone, oppure da situazioni, come il dover superare un esame di lingua.
- ⭕ Completamente d'accordo
- ⭕ Abbastanza d'accordo
- ⭕ Neutro
- ⭕ Non molto d'accordo

○ Per niente d'accordo

Sono in grado di organizzare il mio apprendimento della lingua. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Ho scelto di frequentare un corso perché non mi andava di studiare da solo/a a casa. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Ho scelto di frequentare un corso per integrare il mio percorso personale di studio dell'inglese. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Che rapporto hai con la lingua inglese?

Di seguito ti saranno proposte una serie di affermazioni. Per ognuna indica se sei d'accordo o meno. Non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate, rispondi in base alle tue opinioni e alle tue esperienze.

Se miglioro in inglese, vuol dire che l'insegnante è bravo/a. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Andare bene a scuola è questione di fortuna. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo

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○ Per niente d'accordo

Se miglioro in inglese, è perché mi impegno. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Se fallisco è colpa dell'insegnante. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Farmi imparare l'inglese è un dovere dell'insegnante. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Penso che gli studenti possano dare suggerimenti all'insegnante. *
Ad esempio, sugli argomenti da trattare, se lavorare in coppia, sul tipo di esercizi...
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Gli studenti non dovrebbero contestare ciò che dice o che decide l'insegnante. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

La responsabilità dell'imparare l'inglese è mia, l'insegnante ha solo il ruolo di guida. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo

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○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Che rapporto hai con la lingua inglese?

Di seguito ti saranno proposte una serie di affermazioni. Per ognuna indica se sei d'accordo o meno. Non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate, rispondi in base alle tue opinioni e alle tue esperienze.

Sono preoccupato/a di fare figuracce se parlo inglese in classe. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Preferisco intervenire in italiano e/o parlo solo se costretto/a. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Cerco sempre di esprimermi in inglese, anche se non so tutte le parole o mi vergogno. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Mi piace che l'insegnante corregga i miei errori. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Sono convinto/a che in futuro sarò in grado di parlare e scrivere quasi come un madrelingua. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo

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○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Se l'insegnante mi corregge mi sento come se avessi fallito. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Mi piace ricevere feedback o correzioni dai compagni. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

In generale, sono sicuro/a di me. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Che rapporto hai con la lingua inglese?

Di seguito ti saranno proposte una serie di affermazioni. Per ognuna indica se sei d'accordo o meno. Non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate, rispondi in base alle tue opinioni e alle tue esperienze.

So come mi piace imparare. *
Ad esempio scrivendo le parole, guardando film, ascoltando la radio, parlando con un madrelingua...
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

So come imparo meglio. *
Ad esempio scrivendo le parole, ripetendo ad alta voce, facendo schemi...

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○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Se non capisco qualcosa in un testo, o se non so come dire qualcosa faccio ipotesi. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

So trovare materiali su cui studiare da solo/a a casa. *
Con "materiali" si intende: libri di testo, canzoni, podcast radio, programmi tv, testi autentici...ogni tipo di materiale che può essere usato per studiare la lingua.
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Se ho delle lacune, so come identificarle e correggerle da solo/a. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Sono in grado di monitorare come procede il mio apprendimento. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Se non capisco tutte le parole in un testo vado in panico. *
○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo

○ Per niente d'accordo

Qualsiasi cosa io debba studiare, utilizzo quasi sempre lo stesso metodo. *
Ad esempio, ripetere ad alta voce, scrivere riassunti, fare mappe concettuali...

○ Completamente d'accordo
○ Abbastanza d'accordo
○ Neutro
○ Non molto d'accordo
○ Per niente d'accordo

Grazie per aver partecipato!

Appendix B

STUDENTS' ANSWERS	Being autonomous means…
1. non lo so 2. non ne ho idea 3. Non mi è chiara la domanda 4. ? 5. Non saprei perché io mi sono sempre sentito "autonomo" dall'università in avanti. 6. Secondo me è sempre meglio avere un insegnamento con insegnante lingua madre 7. mi sembra ovvio	I don't know
8. Essere in grado di capire che le certificazioni linguistiche sono veramente utili per il proprio futuro e quindi iniziare a studiare e applicarsi nella lingua per ottenerle	Understanding that linguistic certifications are useful for one's future
9. essere sufficientemente in grado di entrate in sintonia con le altre persone; comunicare, magari in modo semplice, ma efficace. 10. Essere in grado di interloquire di qualsiasi argomento in un altro idioma per mia scelta 11. saper parlare bene altre lingue. 12. Parlare correttamente la lingua e riuscire a comunicare con le altre persone senza problemi	Knowing how to speak and communicate in the FL
13. Non dover frequentare un corso con un insegnante 14. Autosufficienza 15. Poter apprendere in autonomia raggiungendo livelli comunicativi buoni 16. arrangiarsi con quello che si ha 17. sapersi arrangiare 18. saper studiare da soli una lingua	Managing without a teacher
19. Uno studente autonomo è colui il quale decide autonomamente di approcciare lo studio di una lingua straniera, senza che questa attività sia prevista e/o richiesta dal particolare percorso accademico o professionale. 20. Studiare la lingua al di fuori di un percorso di studio apposito,per necessita' e interesse personale 21. Poter scegliere di studiare una per motivazioni personali 22. Studente autonomo per me significa decidere se gli serve quella lingua e organizzarsi per impararla, senza essere obbligato dall'università	Making the choice to study a language

23. Uno studente autonomo è probabilmente colui che ha una passone o una qualsiasi motivazione necessariamente forte da permettergli di affrontare i vari aspetti della lingua che decide di studiare, analizzando e studiando in autonomia determinati aspetti. Questi, sono per esempio la grammatica e in molti casi anche la fonetica. Chiaramente per quanto riguarda le abilità che richiedono feedback (produzione scritta e orale) esso si trova in gran difficoltà.	
24. Essere uno studente autonomo significa impegnarsi per raggiungere un proprio obbiettivo senza obblighi esterni.	
25. Decidere di frequentare un corso di lingua indipendentemente dal percorso di studi conseguito e apprendere in maniere autodidatta	
26. Non saprei...forse studente che prende autonomamente l'iniziativa dello studio di queste	
27. Significa che lo studente è in grado di migliorare la propria conoscenza della lingua straniera tramite uno studio individuale e auto-organizzato, senza dover far ricorso ad aiuti esterni (insegnanti, corsi di lingua...)	Manage the learning without a teacher
28. uno studente che uno studente che riesce a organizzare con mezzi propri un percorso di studio di una lingua straniera	
29. Studente che studia una lingua per proprio conto attraverso piattaforme on line. Non penso sia fattibile a livello universitario, (l'ho scoperto a mie spese) lettorato e' fondamentale.	
30. Secondo me uno "studente autonomo" è capace di studiare una lingua straniera autonomamente, senza dover frequentare cosi di lingue o essere supportato nello studio da un insegnante. Uno "studente autonomo" è in grado di capire quali siano i suoi punti deboli su cui deve lavorare ed inoltre ha una forte motivazione per apprendere una lingua straniera.	
31. Colui che studia le lingue attraverso supporti audio e grammatiche senza frequentare corsi a pagamento con insegnanti	
32. alla mia età 37 anni essere uno studente autonomo significa studiare una lingua straniera perchè lo vuoi, perchè lo senti dentro di te, non perchè sei obbligato come nella scuola dell'obbligo. Autonomia significa gestire e organizzare il tempo tra studio, lavoro e famiglia e non è semplice.	Choosing to study a language and knowing how to manage the learning
33. Avere un buon margine nel gestire gli orari dell'apprendimento, avere chiare e buone motivazioni e finalità di ciò che si decide di intraprendere	Knowing how to manage the learning

34. Riuscire ad organizzarsi per dedicare costantemente del tempo al miglioramento di una lingua straniera	
35. lo studente autonomo è colui che sceglie di studiare una lingua o determinati argomenti, temi di studio e autonomamente senza l'aiuto di nessuno.	Choosing to study a language without a teacher
36. Significa studiare in totale autonomia, essendo anche in grado di autovalutarsi. 37. Svolgere l'autoapprendimento delle lingue straniere attraverso materiali reperibili anche in forma digitale e svolgere un autovalutazione dei risultati ottenuti.	Studying independently and self-evaluate
38. avere la possibilità di programmare date ed orari con insegnanti o cel[38] avere libri, dvd, cd, su cui studiare per confrontarsi con il docente	Programming the learning sessions with the teacher and using one's own materials
39. studiare una lingua straniera non limitandosi ad apprendere unicamente le nozioni apprese durante una lezione frontale col professore, ma andare oltre gli argomenti trattati e le esercitazioni proposte attraverso una ricerca di apprendimento svolta in modo autonoma, di tua spontanea iniziativa. leggere libri o vedere film in lingua, ascoltare tracce audio, trovarsi l'opportunità per imparare e migliorare quello appreso a lezione.	Study independently alongside what is done in class
40. Uno studente autonomo è motivato nello studio della lingua straniera e, con la guida dell'insegnante, regola attivamente il proprio apprendimento. 41. Essere qualcuno che sceglie autonomamente, senza vincoli esterni, di studiare una lingua straniera, dandosi degli obiettivi e portandoli a termine, attraverso uno studio autonomo e basato sulle caratteristiche della persona. Il termine autonomia penso possa riferirsi e alla volontà di studiare una lingua straniera, e alla modalità - singolare e personale - di apprendimento. 42. Uno studente autonomo è per me una persona che sa come organizzarsi. Studia una lingua straniere per proprio piacere facendosi però carico dell'apprendimento	Being an active in the learning, with guidance from a teacher
43. Lo studente autonomo è colui che sceglie di studiare la lingua straniera, senza essere obbligato da altri. Lo studente autonomo è responsabile e si fa carico del proprio apprendimento della lingua straniera. Lo studente autonomo è in grado di organizzare il proprio studio, sa come gli piace imparare ed è in grado di auto-monitorarsi.	***these definitions were copied from the next question in the questionnaire – Invalid

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[38] CEL stands for collaboratore ed esperto linguistico. The acronym is used at CLA to indicate their teachers.

44. Lo studente autonomo è responsabile e si fa carico del proprio apprendimento della lingua straniera	