

Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Autonomy in Remote EFL Courses

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of ten teachers about the autonomy of EFL students in remote teaching. Data were gathered from a questionnaire and a focus group interview. Teachers had claimed that the students possess characteristics that may allow them to achieve effective self-governance of their learning, especially when they have the freedom to choose what to learn, despite their contextual and social difficulties. Nonetheless, results unveiled that contrary to the teachers' expectations, students depicted low levels of autonomy as they attended EFL remotely delivered classes. The study highlights the importance of providing teachers with training on developing learners' autonomy and the use of technology to ensure a more effective students' response in remote teaching.

Keywords: Learner autonomy (LA), remote teaching, language teacher, professional development

Introduction

Language learner autonomy (LLA) has been generally characterized as the learners' ability to take ownership of their learning process, involve in decision making, set learning goals, use effective strategies, and manage the capacity to reflect on their learning process (Holec et al., 1981; Candy et al., 1991; Benson et al., 1996; Little et al., 2020; Dickinson et al., 1994; Cotterall & Crabbe, 1999; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). This characterization has been challenged by Feng (2019) with the idea that LLA is a construct of capacity that may be innate, unstable, changeable and, can occur both inside and beyond the classroom. He claims that it possesses a social and individual dimension and can be promoted if the student has a conscious awareness of the learning process.

Moreover, the literature on LLA has paid particular attention to its benefits to the education field. Little (2020) describes LLA as a construct that advances towards pedagogic; Pritchard (2009) highlights that autonomy in learning is encouraged through collaboration and teamwork, an essential aspect for developing the students' collective thinking to interact and solve problems. Furthermore, it has been claimed that autonomous learners can become life-long learners; as Rao (2018) asserts, "learner autonomy promotes life-long learning that helps in keeping up with the continuous change of professional life and enables engaging in constant self-development."(p.10). What is more, individuals who possess high levels of autonomy have more freedom, control, are more responsible and independent in making decisions (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). However, teachers may find it challenging to develop higher levels of autonomy in students who experience personal and social difficulties that hinder their learning process, to a large extent in remote teaching.

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Accordingly, this qualitative study reports on the teachers' perceptions of their students' autonomy as they attended remote English as a foreign language (EFL) courses in 2020, a difficult moment when face-to-face classes became remote. Until that time, teachers did not have experience in remote teaching but struggled to continue their classes. This study was conducted with ten language teachers instructing in Colombia, the USA, and France who shared their perspectives about the autonomy levels of their students. Four in-service teachers from the public and private sectors participated in a focus group interview.

Teachers' Perceptions on Students' Autonomy

Previous research (Camilleri, 2007; Balçıkanlı, 2010; Al-Shaqsi, 2009; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012) has examined different teachers' beliefs and perceptions of their students' autonomy, reporting high levels of psychological and intellectual capacities of these students to develop their own autonomy. In a study with 200 teachers of 25 different nationalities, Borg (2012) reported that although teachers agree that LLA encourages students to be more effective in their learning, most of their students are not autonomous despite teachers doing their best to help their learners to become autonomous. Another study by Bhattarai (2021) carried out with 133 teachers in Nepal reported an increasing perception of autonomy in language learning acquisition. According to Cuesta et al. (2017), in the Colombian context, teacher education programs include a space for discussion regarding autonomy, turning the concept critical for teachers and students to exchange their criteria concerning the issue. The study reports that autonomy is still in a stage of inconsistent early implementation, leading to reluctance in some teachers and enthusiasm and confidence in others. However, as the literature review was

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conducted, it was observed that little attention had been given to the teachers' perceptions of students' autonomy in remote courses, a gap that this study attempted to fulfill.

Teacher Autonomy

Autonomous teachers are the ones who continuously reflect on their teaching practice to make it more effective for their students and help them become autonomous (Cotteral & Crabbe, 1999). Thus, it is possible to infer that the teacher would not expect their students to master something the teacher himself does not master. As Little (2017) claims, "it is unreasonable to expect teachers to foster the growth of autonomy in their learners if they do not know what it is to be an autonomous learner." (p.13). However, although existing studies indicate a strong preference for a more autonomous learning process, these also emphasize that teachers themselves lack proper training and expertise in this area (Al Asmari, 2013, p. 7).

Learner Autonomy

Little (1991) states that learner autonomy is essential for the student's relationship with the learning process and for developing critical reflection, decision making, and independent actions. Accordingly, Candy (1991) proposes that autonomous learners are methodical, disciplined, logical, analytical, reflective, self-aware, motivated, curious, flexible, interdependent, inter-personally competent, responsible, persistent, venturesome, creative, independent, self-sufficient, skilled in seeking and retrieving information, knowledgeable, skilled in learning, able to develop and use evaluation criteria. Thus, undoubtedly, students must strengthen their autonomy to achieve meaningful learning, and it cannot be denied that education should focus on the development of autonomy consistently.

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In Colombia, teachers had their first approach to LLA with the Colombian project framework for English (COFE) in 1990. A frame of reference from the Ministry of Education included strategies such as reflective practice, teaching research, and autonomy in language learning (Wilches, 2009). LLA is a strategy that is strengthened in teaching languages; as asserted by Little (2007), the development of learner autonomy and the growth of target language proficiency are mutually supporting but fully integrated. However, the different degrees of independence and control will vary according to the learner's cognitive characteristics and the socio-political context (Paiva & Braga, 2008). The present study intends to identify if these degrees of independence and control that are clue factors for the learner to be autonomous were influenced and connected with the socio-political context of the student. As stated by Alvarez-Ayure et al. (2018), "one fundamental area of research needed in the field of second language acquisition in Colombia concerns the social and cultural factors affecting teaching and learning processes" (p.18).

Transitioning to Remote Language Teaching and Learning

This paper uses the terms remote teaching, online teaching, and e-learning interchangeably. According to Kameneva (2013), e-learning, distance learning, and remote education are the same academic process associated with economic growth and imply the combination of synchronous and asynchronous tools. Online education has been in constant development since the information, communication, and technology era. However, many teachers had not entered into this teaching, learning, and assessment atmosphere, nor their students. However, in the light of the lockdown circumstances in 2020, both teachers and students were required to adopt contingency plans to resume their activities in their institutions. This meant a constant effort for the teachers who participated in this study; they needed to

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explore alternative teaching methods through their basic knowledge about remote teaching and figure out new ways to reach their students. Bozkurt & Saharma (2020) affirm that the education system is unprepared and vulnerable to external trends, “as a response to the global education crisis, online emergency remote teaching has been put into practice” (p.2).

Undoubtedly, some educators who had to face the crisis in the work scene were not trained to use virtual platforms and online tools for remote teaching. Scholars like Chuck and Golden (as cited in Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020) have considered emergency remote teaching a temporary solution for an immediate problem. In addition, the study by Bozkurt & Saharma (2020) indicates that stakeholders should consistently support remote teaching to offer better and timely solutions aimed at caring and supporting learners. Whittle (2020) revealed that students' ability to pursue learning in their own homes and at their own pace might allow teachers to engage them in topics and approaches of particular interest that improve and foster their LA. On the other hand, in this transition from face-to-face to remote classes, not only the lack of mastery of the teachers concerning technological tools was evident, but also a high importance of the development of the content that the student had to learn was perceived. Content deserves special consideration, possibly due to its crucial role in promoting autonomy and even more in remote learning, where the internet could substitute the teacher, thus becoming the direct source of information (Bhattarai, 2021).

The analysis of previous studies made it evident that limited attention has been devoted to understanding students' autonomy when transitioning from face-to-face to remote learning. Therefore, this study aims to understand teachers' perceptions of students' autonomy during the Covid-19 crisis and answer the research question: How do language teachers perceive students' autonomy in remote EFL courses?

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Method

Participants

The participants of this qualitative study comprised nine language teachers from Colombia and a language teacher from France; four of these teachers were selected as the focus group: two teach EFL in public schools in Colombia, a Colombian teacher works in a public school in the USA teaching remedial English, a senior teacher leads EFL courses in public higher education in Colombia, and the foreign teacher is a private ESL teacher in France. Table 1 provides details about each participant. It is essential to clarify that for this study, although the contexts of the focus group are different, each of these teachers answered questions regarding the results of the initial survey that was applied to the majority of teachers located in Colombia.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Ten Participants English Teachers of the Study

Participants and Code names	Time	Context		
	<i>Age and Teaching experience (years)</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Place</i>
Teacher 1 (T.1)	28 / 4	Male	Public School	Ocaña – Colombia
Teacher 2 (T.2)	46 / 20	Female	Private School	Ocaña – Colombia
Teacher 3 (T.3)	47 / 20	Female	Public School	Ocaña - Colombia
*Teacher 4 (T.4)	56 / 14	Male	Public University	Ocaña – Colombia
Teacher 5 (T.5)	33 / 6	Female	Public School	Ocaña – Colombia
*Teacher 6 (T.6)	29 / 6	Male	Public School	Ocaña – Colombia
Teacher 7 (T.7)	41 / 19	Male	Public School	Barrancabermeja – Colombia
Teacher 8 (T.8)	41 / 15	Female	Private School	Bogotá – Colombia
*Teacher 9 (T.9)	44 / 10	Male	Public School	Kennesaw – United States
*Teacher 10 (T.10)	45 / 2	Male	Freelance Tutor	Paris – France

Note. *Participants in the focus group

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Data Collection and Analysis

In August 2020, a questionnaire based on Gaumer et al. (2018) was administered to collect qualitative data on teachers' perceptions of students' autonomy development and the strategies teachers employed to help their students succeed in online learning. This questionnaire (see Appendix A) was applied to the ten participants in September. In October, the variables were analyzed and classified. Afterward, the protocol for the focus group (see Appendix B) was prepared. In December 2020, the four participants attended the virtual interview through Microsoft teams, two from the Colombian context and two from other countries. The analysis of the collected data was digitized and organized in a matrix and subjected to coding procedures established by the grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Findings

After coding the collected data, three categories emerged. The first category reflects how the remote teaching constraints unfolded the correlation between technology adaptation and the effects of this adaptation for students and teachers. The second category reports findings outlining social issues that hinder autonomy, like family values, social and cultural facts. The third category conveys findings regarding the feasibility of autonomy.

Remote Teaching Constrains

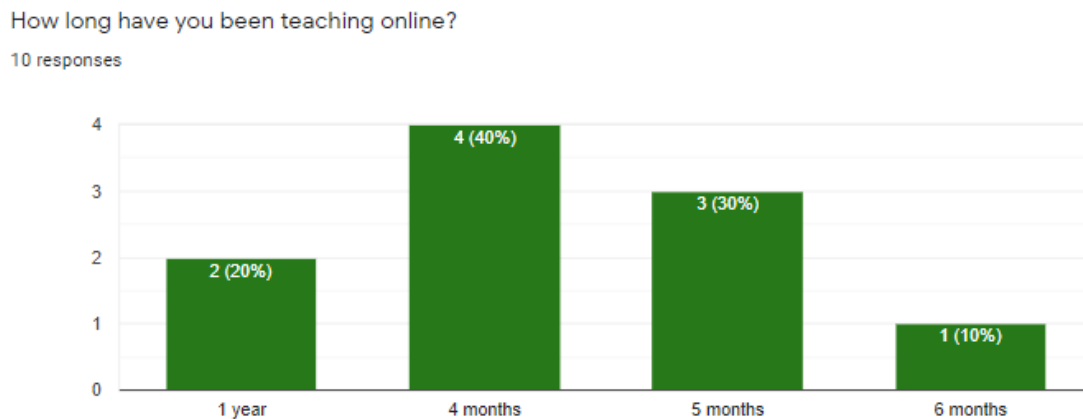
The first set of analyses examined the burden caused by having little knowledge or experience with technology as a tool and media to teach. Participants manifested that they had to deal with high levels of stress, reflected on strenuous working hours to learn and apply teaching methods using digital educational resources and technological tools, with the purpose to continue

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their classes fostering autonomy. Teachers were not trained to teach online (see Figure 1). For these circumstances, professional training for teachers in digital skills is necessary to prepare students for future academic activities (Rahayu & Wirza, 2020).

Figure 1

Time Experience Teaching Online. Questionnaire Responses



Data from Figure 1 can be compared with Table 1 (pg. 8) regarding the teaching experience. The comparison reveals that the teachers' experience in remote teaching is minimal. Only two teachers had one year of technology experience to enhance learning, teaching, and assessment, while the others acquired the experience during the pandemic. However, to continue with the teaching, learning, and evaluation process, they seem to have adapted to the circumstances and managed to learn how to use technological tools like websites, multimedia, and online resources for education, which allowed them to contact their students and continue teaching. Vlieghe & Zamoski (2019) further point out that “good teachers are those who show the willingness and capacity to reflect on their behavior and attitudes, to experiment and to change themselves” (p.104).

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The teachers' perception regarding the autonomy of their students in the adaptation process concerning the remote teaching evidenced that if students do not follow an appropriate methodology, approach, or strategy for that kind of context, the autonomy of these students might continue to be set in doubt.

Excerpt 1

Focus Group Interview

How was your experience as a teacher in this remote teaching?

T4: "I have been in shock. Lots of contradictions, all I can say is that I have tried to do my best. I think we are stressed about these kinds of things that we have to do now to teach with these virtual resources."

T6: "it was tough, to be honest. I feel that we were not prepared for this kind of situation. OK, we as teachers maybe are prepared to handle technology, but we never use it every day, all the time with different people at the same time."

Once the analysis regarding the teachers' responses in the online interview for the focus group was carried out, these teachers' interest in being trained and qualified to conduct online classes was reflected. Teachers expressed the great difficulty, pressure, and stress they had with using technology to continue with their classes, as elucidated in Excerpt 1. Indeed, due to their overall inexperience, these results indicate that the teacher training programs needed to strengthen their curriculum, emphasizing the management of technologies and autonomy for teaching purposes.

Interestingly, teachers had to adapt, employing alternative teaching procedures, such as online teaching approaches, live chatting, class blogs, and game-based teaching, specifically to help students develop activities autonomously. However, teachers had to deal with a reality full of distractions surrounding their students' mental faculty, representing an obstacle for learning, as described in Excerpt 2, where teachers from different contexts perceived the same adverse reality of distracted learning, another challenge that teachers have to deal with, as stated by

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Schmidt (2020) “In a world where distractions abound, we have a golden opportunity to help our students and ourselves learn how to control our actions and focus on what really matter to us” (p.278).

Excerpt 2

Focus Group Interview

How focused do you think students were when developing the course activities?

T4: “they are paying attention to different things at the same; they are under many distractions, they have many things to do while working on homework. They are watching Facebook, watching Instagram, etc., under these distractions, they lose the attention to get worthy goals in their studies.”

T9: “We are seeing one more phenomenon: the distraction factor is so high, and so many distractors are there now. When we were growing up, we only had two or three channels to watch TV. Now they have hundreds of options, and media has been created to keep you all the time attached to it. Media has become so addictive that there is no way for the brain to focus for more than a minute because everything has to be done quickly.”

T10: “I do not see how a student can study with a mobile open with different applications. He can be easily distracted. He has to focus on teacher instructions instead of on a mobile phone.”

Once appropriation concerning technologies was partially resolved, teachers had to deal with a series of issues that the students experimented to a higher degree than expected during their remote learning. Difficulties such as unmindful behaviors, not being aware of instructions, lack of proper sense of responsibility, and few stand-out students were identified. These aspects triggered a negative impact on academic results, reflected in unsatisfactory low grades.

Excerpt 3

Focus Group Interview

T9: “We have seen that the grades have fallen because of working remotely. Meaning that students have been performing lower because of Internet issues, technology is not working for everybody, or some people can be used as an excuse not to complete what they are supposed to. It has been complicated even here where we have all the possibilities.”

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Analyzing what is expressed by T9 in Excerpt 3, we can see that remote teaching impacted students in this country and other places affecting their academic achievements and grades. The confinement affected the educational process, but as mentioned before, the lack of the teacher's direct presence further increased this affectation. Face-to-face support might be irreplaceable to conduct students' academic behavior; consequently, their grades dropped notoriously. By all means, the teacher could not control from a distance several processes; under those circumstances, students had to be autonomous learners to achieve the desired learning objectives in remote teaching.

Figure 2

Questionnaire Responses

Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher

10 responses



Figure 2 depicts an apparent concurrent reaction of teachers against the learner being independent of the teacher; face-to-face classes allowed the teacher to thoroughly guide students, preventing students from being distracted, another evident constraint from remote teaching and learning. The teachers cease to retain total control of the student in remote teaching, which might have led teachers to turn in a kind of personal instruction. "It has been necessary to communicate

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individually and offer personalized feedback,” this was one of the joint statements expressed among all the teachers who participated in the study, which in turn received a better response of autonomy when focusing on a student-centered approach was in the run. However, at the same time, teachers experienced high levels of stress due to the time demanding that this kind of strategy required on account of the high number of students.

Social Issues Might Hinder Autonomy

Teachers' perspective during this remote learning system confirms that social influence regarding family values and cultural facts affected the students' learning autonomy progression. In Excerpt 4, teachers' perspective can be appreciated regarding the lack of accompaniment of the families in the academic processes of the students, a relevant aspect that was reflected in remote classes affecting the autonomy and academic performance of students. According to Chomsky (2006), the study of human behavior may be related to what this individual knows. So what the student knows primarily is through the example of the family.

Excerpt 4

Focus Group Interview

T4. “Well autonomous depend on their family too, we are only talking about teacher and students, but parents at home? Family counts. I do not know who is living there with the student at the moment but depend on the family nucleus to control them, so students do not give up.”

T9. “Specific populations are more interested in their learning, and some do not care, so it has to do with their context. In my personal opinion, it has to do with social class. Unfortunately, some people have more interest in learning than others and have been taught that at home.”

Interviewees demonstrated that there might be a definite connection between family values and students' performance. Moral and ethical principles upheld and passed on within the family as core values like duty, responsibility, honesty, integrity, effort, and perseverance should

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be appropriate for students to facilitate learning autonomy. Family values are fully correlated with their socioeconomic status effects that do not contribute to entering the dimension of autonomy. A significant number of students with poor academic development belong to families under very unfavorable socioeconomic circumstances. According to Murray (2014), “social class is important as it relates to how learners’ socioeconomic origin may influence their performance at school” (p. 197). Further analysis showed that these students demonstrated irresponsibility, low participation, delay in delivering works, and high dependency during the remote teaching context.

From data in Excerpt 5, it is apparent that the culture of violence impacted the student performance in the school, primarily for the hostile influential condition families have been exposed to and for a disruptive vision of the systematic order of running a family. That is reflected in dysfunctional families, which are not a strong foundation for the children who have to witness serious problems and deal with them in their academic life.

Excerpt 5

Focus Group Interview

T6. “I could say that 80% of the students have a complicated situation in their family, so they were people who moved out from their towns because of the violence, you know, and they come here with dysfunctional families.”

Cultural and social facts influence the development of the students’ behavior. Probably by teaching methodologies that teachers struggle to apply in remote teaching like: flipped classroom, project-based learning, cooperative learning, gamification, problem-based learning, design thinking, competency-based learning, students might explore this world differently. They are aware and cling to make changes by themselves, transforming their reality; since they know

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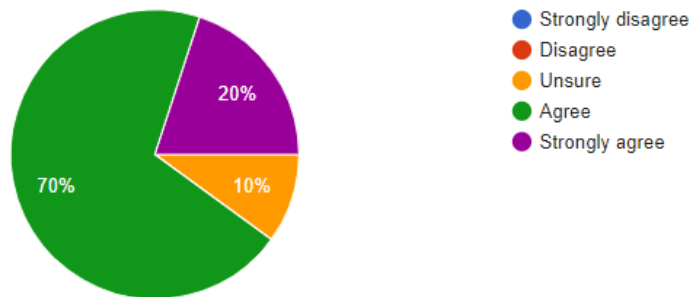
that their own families do not guarantee this type of vision, therefore the content and topics that can be shared with students are very relevant to change their reality through education.

Figure 3

Questionnaire Responses

Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.

10 responses



This statistical result revealed that teachers have a positive perspective towards achieving learning autonomy. In this regard, education can be transformative and influential in creating cultural realities that promote a change in consciousness and behavior, despite the fact that students have adverse realities in their context.

Feasibility of Autonomy

This study provides an opportunity to understand that despite students' difficulties in the exercise and enhancement of autonomy during remote teaching, they may possess some of the critical characteristics of autonomous learners, e.g., analytical, reflective, curious, venturesome, creative, flexible, and positive self-concepts (Candy 1991, p. 66). Nevertheless, the responses to

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the questionnaire revealed that students might not have the characteristics represented in Figure 4, which do not allow them to develop their self-governance to a great extent in learning.

Figure 4.

Limitations that May Affect Students' Autonomy



These six characteristics of learner autonomy that teachers perceived in their students have significant deficiencies that may need to be addressed. Education must focus on this issue, and there might well be the possibility of developing students' autonomy. Therefore, teachers should focus on strategies that may support students to overcome those characteristics with significant deficiencies identified during the remote classes and assure students possess them to favor their development of autonomy.

Content is a factor that deserves attentive consideration for promoting learner autonomy. In a remote experience, the teacher had to modify the curriculum content. The themes to be taught were included and adapted in an artifact called learning and working guide, a printed

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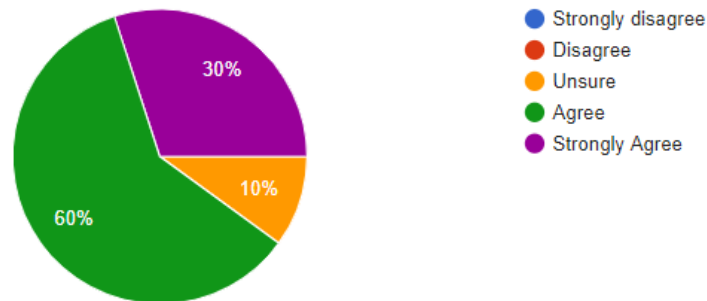
material delivered to the students. At the same time, teachers had to strive online explaining and receiving the resolved guides. Teachers tried to involve students in decisions regarding the content in the guides. Figure 5 shows that the teachers' perceptions were very positive regarding involving the students in choosing what to learn to promote their autonomy.

Figure 5.

Questionnaire Responses

Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.

10 responses



According to Figure 5, 90% of the teachers positively perceive the students' content decisions to generate learner autonomy. This approach can contribute significantly to the student's motivation and interest to learn. Benson (as cited in Ludwig, 2017) argues that the learners should determine content to be more autonomous.

Excerpt 6

Focus Group Interview

Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes autonomy. All teachers promote this statement. What is your reaction to this?

T6. "I try to make them choose a free topic. Furthermore, I have felt that I am motivated by that idea."

T9. "I like the idea. It gives some freedom, and maybe we create more interest for students."

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Although providing the student with freedom to choose what to learn might promote autonomy, Murray (2014) highlights that freedom is one of the three components to control learning, ability, and desire. It is essential to consider how to address this freedom. The student can choose content related to curriculum topics, not by moving away from it but by complementing it. Nowadays, where the virtual world of video games is popular and has captured the attention of young people, many students suggested to the teachers to incorporate this idea into classes as content. Some teachers implemented gamification in their remote teaching, which allowed them to bring students closer to core topics; this was reflected in the evident perception of teachers regarding the functionality of including video games in the learning content during remote teaching. For example, in excerpt 7, T6 asserts that games were part of the strategies he employed to motivate students.

Excerpt 7

Focus Group Interview

<p>T6. "I created a YouTube channel in which I provide English explanations in Spanish to easily make the idea about what we are learning at the moment. Then I tried to use some games that, for example, involve the Internet to acquire more vocabulary this year. Some funny games that they can find on the Internet quickly and in that way sometimes I like a poster my students have done."</p>
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The findings of this study revealed that participants agree about the lack of autonomy of their students during the remote courses. The pressing need to motivate them and strengthen them with that vital skill was imperative. Therefore these teachers decided to train and master technological tools to innovate and change their classes. However, students were behind their expectations most of the time, presumably influenced by social issues that hindered their autonomy. Some students seemed to have difficulty delivering their work, and others showed little interest and dependency attitudes, impacting notoriously on their grades.

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Excerpt 8

Focus Group Interview

T6. "I agree that students do not present their tasks on time and by their autonomy for cultural background. We have to be always there, like reminding them that they have to do this and remind them for tomorrow with the English test or remember that you have to write an essay or paragraph next week. Nevertheless, unfortunately, that is our culture, you know, and we cannot do something different in that context or in that situation."

T9. "Others have a lot of pressure, probably from home, probably from within themselves, and they try to get back to where they are supposed to be. Yes, I think that many students are falling behind. Many times, they are going to give up."

T10. "I think that in more support more productivity from students. These are people that need special attention from the teachers, and I think the school is not able to give this kind of particular attention right now."

Discussion

The present study was intended to determine how language teachers perceived their students' autonomy during EFL remote courses. In the light of the results, it is evident that teachers considered that students might have failed in their LLA during the confinement. Conversely, the ten teachers who took part in the study had high expectations regarding their students' autonomy. This finding aligned with Borg (2012), whose participants claimed to have higher expectations regarding the autonomy of their students when comparing the level of self-governing they possessed.

The context during remote EFL courses was highlighted in plenty of codes in this study. Teachers had to guide their students in a way they never did before, and students followed academic instruction remotely never experienced before. Despite this adverse reality, the shift was possible thanks to the teachers' persistence to keep updated in the use of technologies for teaching and exploring different online materials to approach their students remotely. It is somewhat surprising that the pedagogical approaches to fostering autonomy in remote teaching were significant for teachers' achievement. Thus, finding that the autonomy of their students could be possible to a great extent thanks to the transformation of the teaching practices despite the unexpected novel context, the social and personal circumstances derived from it. This aspect

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of adaptability influenced students notably to continue their studies and was identified notoriously by the teachers who conducted their classes with vocation. This finding corroborates the ideas of Asmari (2013) when mentioning that teachers guide students to accept responsibility for their learning, guiding them to be reflectively engaged in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning, despite the different adversities that arise.

Another important finding was that all the teachers' perceptions in this study were concurrent with the student's dependence on their teachers and their direct instruction. Students must strengthen their autonomy to be independent; thus, their work can be developed with self-confidence, self-determination, and self-governance. That was precisely what teachers did not identify in their students' performance during their remote learning. "It is teachers' job to provide favorable situations, and some input promotes learner autonomy, and students have to make all the necessary efforts to learn independently" (Bhattarai, 2021). All participants reported a strong relationship of dependency from their students, either with the teacher or parents.

Contrary to expectations, a study developed by Cotteral & Crabbe (1999) reported that the pedagogy in Portugal is dependent because knowledge is static, the learner is passive, and the teacher is just a transmitter of knowledge. It was evident that the same three characteristics are also related to those perceived by the participants during their remote classes. That means that it is a phenomenon that must be resolved thanks to the methodologies that the teacher can incorporate to foster student autonomy. What should be established at the very outset is that teachers need to innovate and change their teaching practices.

Once teachers' perspectives regarding the autonomy of their students in EFL remote courses have been analyzed, it can be elucidated that education professionals have to focus harder on solutions to fight against the lack of self-governance of learning in the current students.

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Researchers such as Cuesta et al. (2019) have suggested that “teachers will need a scaffolder, organized plan to build on such skills, so they can gain expertise to self-control and focus on their target professional outcomes” (p.56). Teacher-educators should conceive actions to inspire teacher-learners and help them evolve from awareness to set and manage accomplishments in LLA for transforming education. Further work is required to establish to what extent teacher training programs might offer more strategies to strengthen autonomy in pedagogical practices and technology for education. Thus, teachers are ready to incorporate different methods in class to encourage students to take complete control and responsibility for their learning.

Conclusion

Through the teachers' perceptions, this study attempted to determine that the technical, social, and psychological aspects were decisive for the non-contribution to LLA in remote EFL courses. The evidence from this study showed that the students' autonomy experience did not meet the teachers' expectations, teachers perceived in their students: lack of attention, disruptive behaviors, irresponsibility, and dependency during the remote teaching experience, which produced low academic achievements and lower than expected grades. Nevertheless, teachers had a vital perception regarding the students' freedom to choose what to learn during the remote teaching that evidenced interest, motivation, and subsequently LA.

The study only examined the teacher's perceptions on LLA; but, it is possible to say that LA as an influential factor for learning could be approached with much more dedication. All education mechanisms need to be put into action, especially teacher training programs which have to guarantee current and pertinent professional development in the face of autonomy growth and everything that has to do with remote teaching. The pedagogical implication of

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mastering these abilities from the educational professionals might foster awareness and the students' capacity to be autonomous learners, who will create better societies through their acquired abilities from education to serve in a fiercely competitive post-pandemic era.

Limitations of the Study

One of the main limitations is regarding the exploration of the impacts that the lack of technology infrastructure, the internet cost, and the family financial crisis might have caused to the autonomy of the students. There was no examination of these obstacles and their implications for remote teaching and, more importantly, the LLA. This study focused on the teachers' perceptions of students' autonomy and the relation of this ability with remote teaching. Therefore, further research may delve into this aspect.

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Thank you for taking some of your busy time to participate in this project. The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify the Teachers' perceptions on students ' autonomy and self-regulation development and the strategies they have used to help them succeed in online learning. Your anonymity will be respected, and the answers you provide in this form will be used solely for educational and research purposes.

Once again thank you for your collaboration.

Please dear teacher add the following demographic information first.

1. Teacher's complete name

2. Age

3. Race

Mixed

White

Afro-Latino

Indigenous

Asian

4. Education Level

Undergraduate degree

Specialization degree

Master degree

5. How long have you been working as an English teacher?

6. How long teaching online?

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY

7. What courses are you in charge of at school?
8. Which online tools do you use with your students in this remote teaching?
9. The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learning autonomy.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
10. Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
11. Your Students keep track of their progress toward goals *Mark only one oval.*
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
12. Your students are able to accomplish goals on time *Mark only one oval.*
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY

13. As soon as your students see a problem or challenge in the tasks you assign, they start looking for possible solutions

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

14. Most of the time your students do not pay attention to what they are doing.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

15. Your students usually think before they act

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

16. If an important test is coming up, your students create a study plan.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY

17. When your students get behind on their work, they often give up.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree
18. Your students keep making the same mistake over and over again
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
19. Students of all ages can develop learner autonomy
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree
20. Students who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY

21. Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

22. Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

23. Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

24. Learners' autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY

25. Learners autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

26. Learner autonomy implies rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

27. Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

28. Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY

29. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

30. Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

31. Cooperative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

32. Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY

33. Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

34. Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

35. The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

36. To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY

37. Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

38. The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learning autonomy.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

This questionnaire is based on :

Brown, Miller, & Lawendowski,(1999)

Borg, S., & Al-Busaidi, S. (2012)

Gaumer Erickson, A.S. & Noonan, P.M. (2018)

Appendix B

Protocol for the focus group

Preparation

For this interview literature about autonomy and self-regulation has been thorough reviewed through the model of annotated bibliography, in order to guide the chosen questions, on account of the topics position by the following scholars: Alvarez Ayure C, Baron Pena C, Martinez Orjuela M, Garold Murray, Barry J. Zimmerman, Feryal Cubukcu, Simon Borg, Saleh Al-Busaidi, Shunk, Dale H, Elham Tavallali, Amin Marzban, Ellen L, Usher, Frank Pajares, Little D, Legenhausen, Manzano Vazquez B, Xuesong A Gao and Terry Lamb

Content

Hello My name is Jose Alfredo Franco Leon, I am a Master in English teaching student from the Universidad de La Sabana. I am here to learn more about autonomy and self-regulation with you. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. The purpose of this interview is to learn about the Teacher's perceptions on student's autonomy and self-regulation and how do they tackle these abilities in this remote teaching. There are no right or wrong answers, or desirable or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel. If it is okay with you, I will be recording our conversation. Everything you say will remain confidential, meaning that only my professor and I will be aware of your answers.

During the interview you will be asked to tell me your perspectives regarding autonomy taking from the questionnaire "Teacher's perceptions on student's autonomy and self-regulation", solve by eight English teachers from different education sectors, elementary, secondary and high education.

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY

Introductory questions:

Tell me what is your name? And where are you from?

How did you get into the education field? Or how did you become interested in teaching?

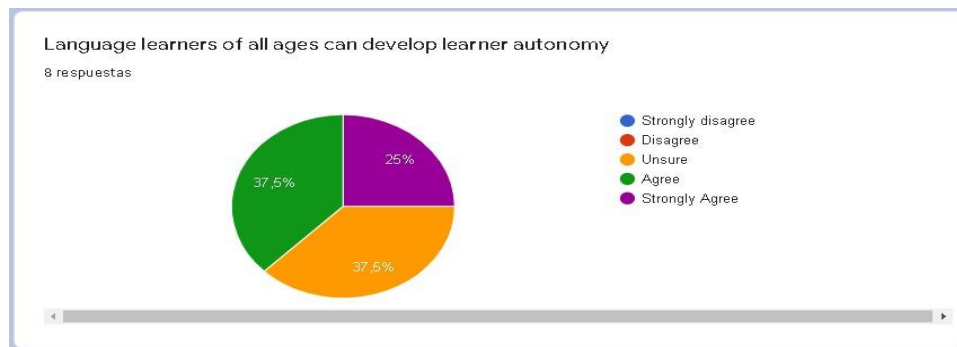
Where are you teaching?

How long have you been teaching?

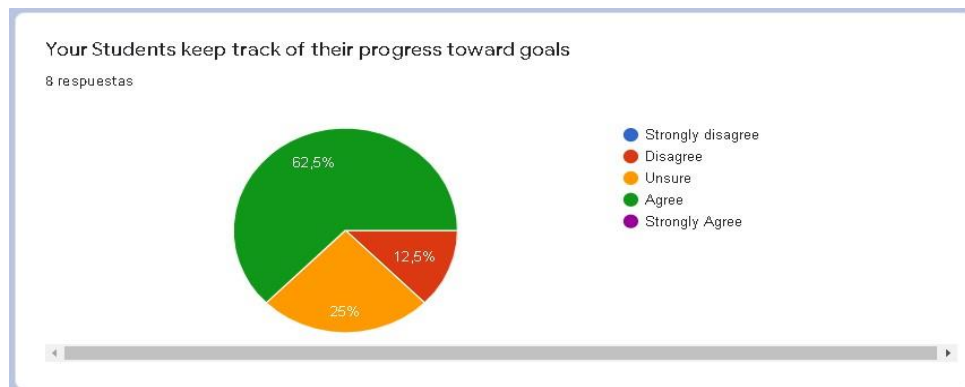
Tell me about the ways you have taken to foster autonomy in your students? Can you describe the kind of students you work with?

Based on the information provided in the questionnaire “Teachers’ perceptions on students’ autonomy”

In this statement we can see that more than 62% consider that language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy, but 37.5% a considerable result are not sure. Why do you think teachers are unsure about this assertion?

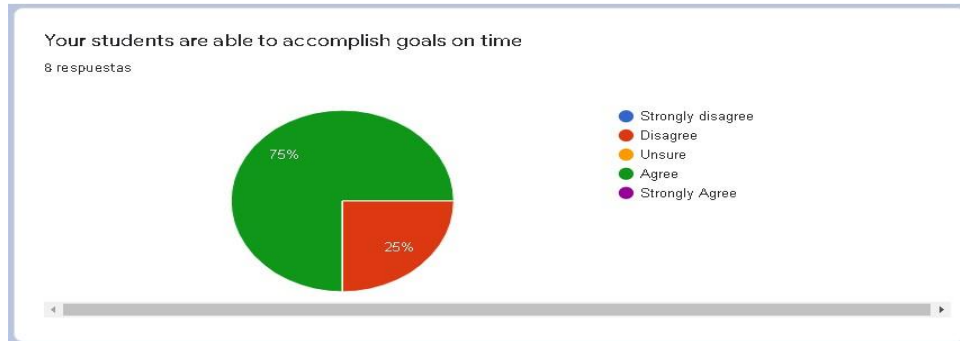


In this spot the majority of the teachers contemplate that their students are aware of how they are doing toward their own goals. But some took a different view at choosing disagreement and others are unsure. What is your reaction to this perspective?

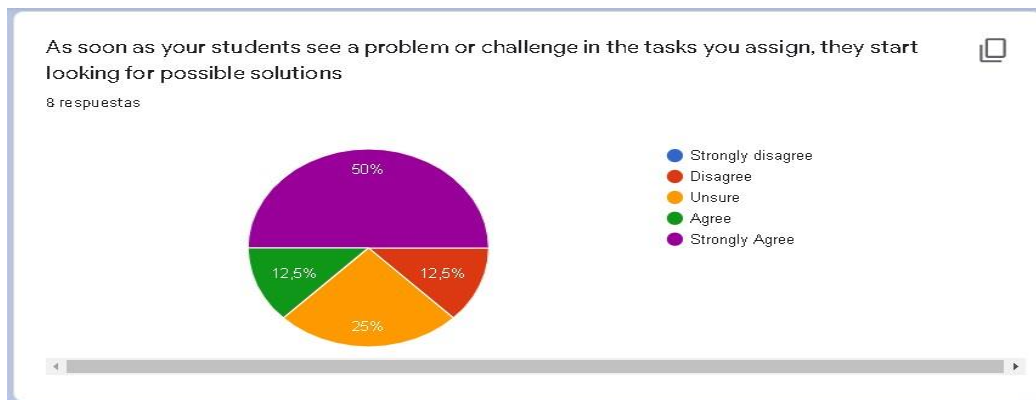


TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY

In this place 75 % think that their students are able to accomplish goals on time, but there are different views, 25 % are in disagreement with that. How do you feel about this?

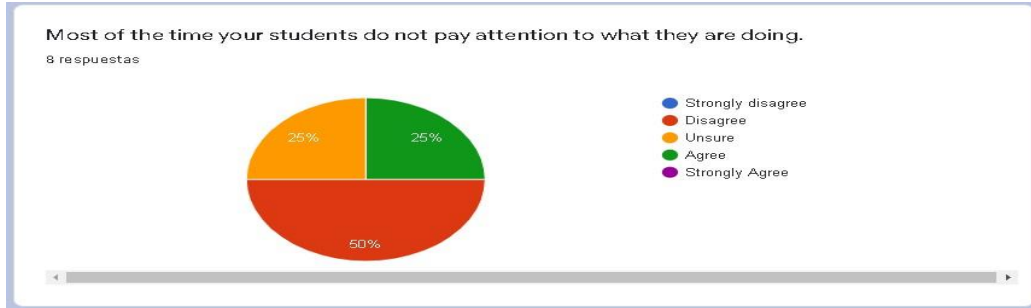


62.5 % consider their students are problem solvers in contrast others are unsure and others do not think so. What are your thoughts on this?

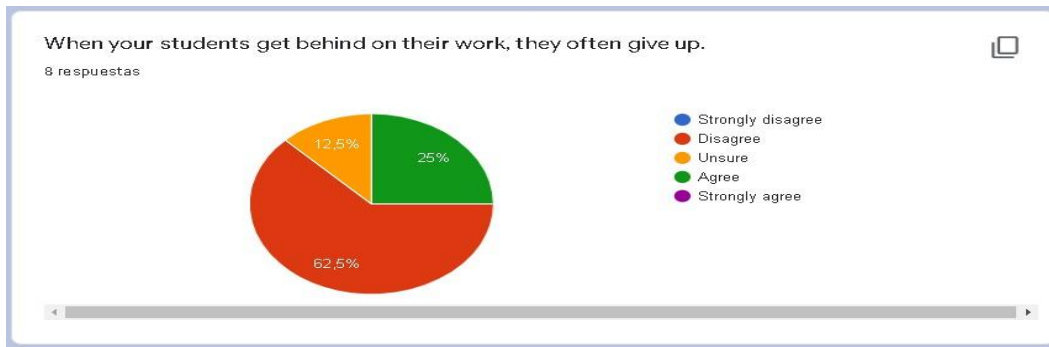


Here the 50% of teachers' opinion regarding students' attention are in disagreement about most of the time students do not pay attention to what they are doing. Tell me if students really deal with special care when they are developing an activity? Learning activities draw enough interest to allow students focus their full attention to what they are doing?

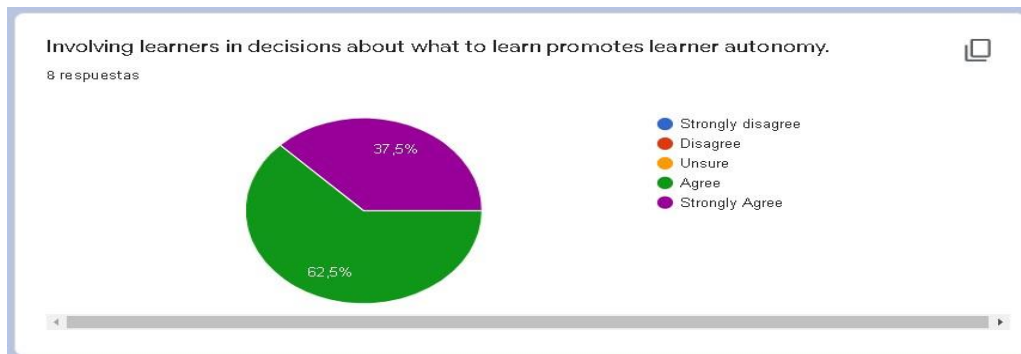
TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY



I am tempted to think that this is a very worrying result, only 62.5 % of the teachers consider that students do not easily give up when they are behind on their work. Tell me if our students do not yield control or possession on what they are doing How can they be autonomous ?

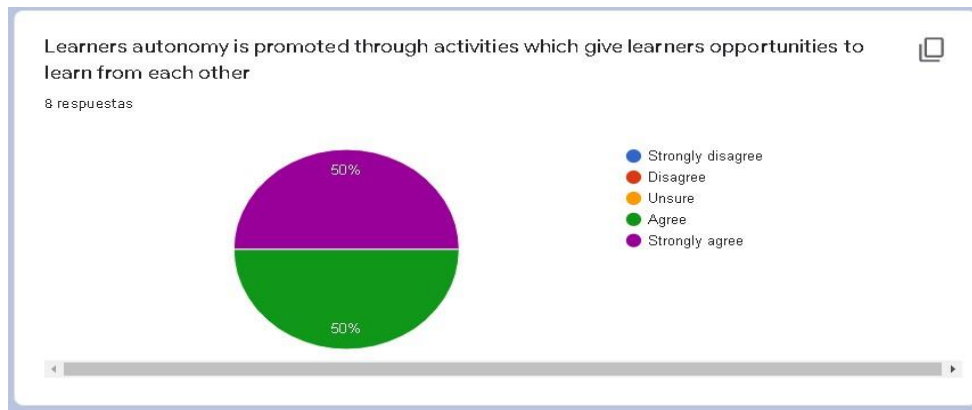


This result strikes me. Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes autonomy. All teachers promote this statement. What is your reaction to this?



TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENTS' AUTONOMY

Finally teachers agree with cooperative work to promote autonomy. What do you think?



My final set of questions are focused on getting to know more about the current education challenge for the health emergency. I am interested in your experiences and believes as a teacher, especially in this remote teaching adverse reality, so tell me how are you dealing with the challenges of this remote teaching?

Can you explain how you are using internet to continuous your teaching process? Or what resources are available to you to keep on working with your students?

Could you tell me about some experiences you have had working with your students in this remote teaching?

Thank and wrap up

I would like to thank you once again for your time and for being willing to participate in this interview, I must tell you that this interview has been very helpful for my study, Would you tell me your final thoughts about autonomy and self-regulation. How did you feel during this interview? Finally. Do you have any questions for me?