The Development of Learner Autonomy for the Sophomore TEFL Students at UCA

Research Report for Obtaining the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Author: Michael Antonio Rodríguez Palacios

Tutor: Priscilla Alemán Moreno

Managua, Nicaragua

December, 2015
Acknowledgments

First of all, I truly wish to express my deepest gratitude to God, Jesus Christ, whose guidance and tremendous support made all of this possible. Then, my gratitude is extended to the following persons:

My parents, for the encouragement they provided me with, which pushed me to always keep on studying, learning, and to never quit the TEFL major. My three siblings, for all their love and help given especially in the past four years.

All my classmates, for their friendship and fellowship in the bad times and good times we had in the major. Likewise, all my English professors at UCA, for sharing their profound knowledge, overall professor Horacio Novoa, who was my first tutor for this research paper, and professor Priscilla, whose tutorship was extremely helpful. Finally, a special thanks to my mentor, Juan Carlos Montiel, for the valuable advice and generous support he has always given me.
Index

Abstract

I. Introduction .............................................................................................................................................. 1
II. Justification ............................................................................................................................................... 3
III. Objectives .............................................................................................................................................. 5
   General objective ........................................................................................................................................ 5
   Specific Objectives: .................................................................................................................................... 5
IV. Literature Review .................................................................................................................................... 6
   A. Second language acquisition theories .................................................................................................. 6
      1. The learning hypothesis and monitor hypothesis .............................................................................. 7
      2. The affective filter hypothesis ........................................................................................................... 8
      3. Social constructivism theory ........................................................................................................... 9
   B. Communicative approach ....................................................................................................................... 10
V. Research Methodology ............................................................................................................................. 13
   A. Type of research .................................................................................................................................... 13
   B. Participants .......................................................................................................................................... 13
      1. Learners ............................................................................................................................................. 13
      2. Professors and coordinator ............................................................................................................... 14
   C. Technique to collect data ..................................................................................................................... 14
   D. Instruments .......................................................................................................................................... 14
      1. Survey to the learners ....................................................................................................................... 14
      2. Questionnaire to the learners ........................................................................................................... 15
      3. Class observations ............................................................................................................................ 15
      4. Interviews with the professors and coordinator .............................................................................. 15
   E. Procedures .......................................................................................................................................... 16
   F. Schedule to collect data ....................................................................................................................... 17
   G. Constraints .......................................................................................................................................... 17
VI. Data analysis .................................................................................................................................................. 19
   A. Results .......................................................................................................................................................... 19
      1. Results from the surveys .......................................................................................................................... 19
      2. Results from the questionnaires ................................................................................................................. 20
      3. Results from the class observations .......................................................................................................... 21
      4. Results from the interviews ....................................................................................................................... 22
   B. Discussion .................................................................................................................................................... 25

VII. Conclusion .................................................................................................................................................. 29

VIII. Recommendations .................................................................................................................................. 31

References

Appendix
Abstract

Learner autonomy, a concept formulated in the 1960s, became popular until the 1990s. In the current education system, as students are now the focus of attention, such a concept can facilitate and accelerate the learning-teaching process. Nevertheless, there have been various factors which have prevented students from gaining independence in learning. Accordingly, this research attempts to describe and explain the development of learner autonomy for sophomore TEFL students at UCA.
I. Introduction

The history of English teaching has been influenced by various changes in the methods and approaches used for facilitating knowledge exchange. A remarkable modification in language teaching was the shift from a teacher-centered approach to a learner centered one. As a result from this turn, a concept known as learner autonomy was formulated. Holec, the father of learner autonomy, describes it as the ability to take on responsibility in one’s own learning (as cited in Palfreyman and Smith, 2003). Generally, learner autonomy is associated with solitude; nevertheless, autonomous learners still need to work alongside their language instructors and classmates in order to obtain more learning opportunities. Also, in order to create a productive learning environment, these learners are able to take full advantage of every tool and resource at their disposal (Cam Le, 2005). As a consequence, the outcomes of these actions should show a great betterment in the learning process. Then, this project started from the curiosity and the necessity to acquire more knowledge regarding this theory.

Likewise, the topic for this research focuses on the development of learner autonomy for sophomore TEFL students at UCA. There are three groups of sophomore TEFL students. One group is composed of 20 students, and the other two groups have 35+ learners each one. Further, the pupils are mostly teenagers and young adults, who have been learning the language mainly through the communicative approach, which is the teaching approach favored within this context. Albeit, there might be certain learners who do not have significant characteristics as the ones as autonomous learners possess; in contrast, some major limitations may be present in their learning process. Perhaps it could be the lack of knowledge and interest in learner autonomy which prevent learners from carrying out fundamental tasks for their studies. Undoubtedly, the promotion and development of this concept can significantly help out every student, as relevant numerous benefits will be obtained in the learning-teaching process.

Given all these points, the outline for this research paper is presented. At first, the general and specific objectives are established. Afterwards, a great
number of theories, concerning learner autonomy, teaching methods, and language acquisition, are included in the literature review. Next, the research methodology is stated, as well as the instruments designed for collecting data. Then, the information gathered from the instruments is analyzed. At last, recommendations are given.
II. Justification

Every human being reaches a stage in life in which personal independence is necessary. With regards to learner autonomy, there are copious cases of students being unable to become autonomous learners. Besides, usually for achieving learner independence, students encounter two serious obstacles such as lack of motivation and experience in assuming responsibility for their own learning (Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012). Though it is a fact that every single learner still remains dependent upon what the educational institute, curriculum or educator has to offer, the first must recognize the relevance of leaving their comfort zone, so that they can achieve independent learning.

The development of learner autonomy is enormously useful for students in general, yet for EFL learners it is even more vital. In consequence, such a concept has to be strongly promoted in every EFL programme. Despite the importance of learner autonomy being notorious, most students from the TEFL major at UCA have ignored and been careless about it. As a matter of fact, numerous learners have been unsuccessful in learning the language. One of the most common issues they have faced is experiencing what is known as the plateau effect. According to Sullivan and Thompson (2013), “the plateau effect occurs when a formerly effective measure ceases to cause further change.” In this particular situation, students’ English level of proficiency does not improve; notwithstanding, the learners know it is fundamental they give their speaking, reading and writing skills a good polish. This issue arises particularly in the second year of the TEFL major when the pupils experience the transition from learning the language to learning how to teach the language. At this period, the learners should have developed their communicative competences as they have learned English through the communicative approach. Hence, from now on it is not about the professors correcting the learners’ mistakes in grammar, writing, pronunciation, etc. yet it is about the educators teaching pedagogy, linguistics, teaching methodology among other subjects. Consequently, this situation is not very pleasant for the sophomore students who are not used to studying on their own; therefore, many of them have a difficult time trying to
overcome the plateau effect and the weaknesses in their language. Then, learner autonomy should adequately solve this problem as autonomous learners are capable of coming up with their own clever plans in order to break down those barriers which prevent them from enjoying their learning experience (Weimer, 2012). In addition, autonomous learners are very likely to have the capacity for lifelong learning, a type of learning which greatly aids an individual through his/her professional career. As a result of learner autonomy and lifelong learning, learners should not only become brilliant students, but also highly competent EFL teachers. Finally, for all these reasons, this research will be focused on identifying and explaining the development of this sophisticated concept in the context previously mentioned.
III. Objectives

General objective
Determine the influence of the communicative approach and students’ attitude on the development of learner autonomy for sophomore TEFL students at UCA.

Specific Objectives:

- Identify how the implementation of the communicative approach aids the students to become autonomous learners.

- Find out the sophomore students’ aptitude and attitude towards becoming autonomous learners.

- Describe the harmony between the communicative approach and the learners’ attitude, as a propitious setting for achieving lifelong learning.
IV. Literature Review

During the XX century the teaching of English as a foreign language experienced a movement away from the traditional approach. While the domain of that approach, teachers were seen as the supreme authority in the classroom, and those educators had a primary objective which was the transmission of knowledge. However, the traditional approach became obsolete; thus, it was replaced by two main approaches: the communicative approach and the student-centered approach. These approaches have come to facilitate the learning-teaching process, as one focuses on the development of communicative competences (Larsen, 2000), and the other one is based on having the student performing a more active role as they learn (Weimer, 2012). Likewise, the notion of autonomy in language learning is regularly represented as a radically learner-centered idea, in which the students become aware and gain control over their learning process (Lamb and Reinders, 2008). Even though the development of learner autonomy is tremendously beneficial to professors and pupils, its fomentation is not an easy task to carry out. Consequently, in order to illustrate a way to foster student independence, some second language acquisition theories, as well as the communicative approach, have been taken into account.

A. Second language acquisition theories

Roger Ascham, a British didactic writer from the 1500s, once claimed “as a hawk flieth not high with one wing, even so a man reacheth not excellence with one tongue.” Since his time and even earlier, mankind has recognized the immense value of learning a second language. Nowadays, there is a handful set of theories explaining how people acquire a second language. The illustrious linguist Stephen Krashen remarks that acquisition requires natural communication (as cited in Schutz, 2014). In that way, it is not difficult to establish a relation between second language acquisition theories and the communicative approach. Nevertheless, for this research paper three hypotheses by Kranshen, and the constructivism theory, have been considered as the most ideal ones for cultivating autonomous learners.
1. The learning hypothesis and monitor hypothesis

Krashen (1982) refers to learning as the formal knowledge which pupils obtain by knowing the rules and being aware of them. Furthermore, learning consciously means that the learners have to figure out the rules in order to be able to apply them into real situations. For this reason, the eminent linguist suggests error correction as a resource that facilitates the understanding and mastering of the rules.

The use of error correction leads to Krashen's next hypothesis. In the monitor hypothesis, it is stated that the learning gained by the students works like an editor or monitor. Learners monitor their language before or after they speak or write (Krashen, 1982). Edition takes place after the students have performed the action of speaking or writing, and this monitoring is related to self-correction. In fact, optimal monitor users would make as much corrections as necessary, so that their spoken and written productions can be more and more accurate. Also, optimal monitor users are very likely to become autonomous learners.

Once the rules have been understood, then the pupils just need to understand the purpose of learning in general (Cam Le, 2005). After that, they should move from error correction to self-regulation. Self-regulated learners can manage and self-assess their learning in all the different stages. Even though they may experience failure, those students are capable of coming up with effective solutions to fix whatever went wrong (Weimer, 2010). As a result, self-regulated or autonomous learners take advantage of all the learning sources available inside and outside the classroom. This ability of making every single learning opportunity count is one the most relevant and beneficial characteristics that independent students possess.

In order to become self-regulated learners, sophomore students should become first optimal users, which implies that they have to monitor their language and self-correct their errors in speaking and writing. There are times in which these second year TEFL students make mistakes because they do not monitor their language
before speaking. Nonetheless, due to the fact that these pupils have already taken advanced grammar, they should have figured out complex grammar rules, which indicates that they ought to be capable of self-correcting such errors.

2. The affective filter hypothesis

In this theory Krashen demonstrates how the affective factors are connected to the process of second language acquisition. The affective variables cause a major impact on the attitudes of the learners towards the comprehensible input. This type of input is what triggers learning; in other words, acquisition takes place by having exposure to comprehensible input. Since the learners’ responses to comprehensible input depend on the effect of affective variables, it means those variables can determine in large part the success of the second language acquisition process. In addition, the prestigious author of this hypothesis (1982) presents in his book *Principles and practice in second language acquisition* three main categories of affective variables: Motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Obviously, the most propitious for the effectiveness in the process of second language acquisition is having the learners at a high level of motivation, self-confidence, and at low level of anxiety. In contrast, students who lack motivation, self-confidence, and suffer from anxiety, will have a strong affective filter, which implies they will not care about getting comprehensible input.

If the category of motivation provokes that the pupils are not interested in assimilating comprehensible input, the case is dramatically worse for the encouragement of self-motivation which is required for promoting learner autonomy. In order to cultivate independent students, it is fundamental that the professors inspire the pupils to keep on learning outside the classroom. Cam Le (2005) recommends this can be done through activities such as “reading newspapers, magazines, or books; listening to the radio; watching movies; surfing the Internet; talking to foreigners; keeping a journal; practicing conversation with friends; studying in groups.” (p. 7). Furthermore, it is a brilliant idea to assign the learners to reflect on their experience about the course; in this way, they will assess their weaknesses and ask for ways to overcome them. The teachers should
take into consideration the outcomes from those reflections, so that they can make certain adjustments to the course, for making students being more committed to it (Robertson, 2013).

Lowering the pupils’ affective filter and increasing their level of self-motivation turns out to be crucially essential not only for the acquisition of a second language, but also for developing learner independence. It is evident this is well known at UCA by all the TEFL professors, who definitely master this learning-teaching theory. Accordingly, the TEFL professors know the relevance of weakening the students’ affective filter in order to facilitate and accelerate the learning process. Likewise, those educators surely provide their pupils with comprehensible input for the exact same reasons previously given, and certainly those students are as well encouraged to continue with their learning outside the classroom. Perhaps, the only thing missing would be reflections and changes within the courses, which are hardly ever seen, yet they are required for motivating and cultivating TEFL autonomous learners.

3. Social constructivism theory

Before this theory, students were treated like containers which needed to be filled with knowledge; fortunately, this situation has changed. Currently, professors and learners are sharing knowledge; therefore, learning has become an active process of construction leaving behind the antiquated philosophy of education based on a passive process of acquisition of knowledge (Scholnik, Kol and Abarbanel, 2006). Also, the eminent psychologist Lev Vigotsky wrote about constructivism in learning. He focused his work on social constructivism. As a consequence, social constructivists concentrate on the social interaction upon learning. They demand that students ought to be exposed to materials, situations and experiences that inductively aid the construction of their learning. Vigotsky strongly believed that learning takes place through the interaction between people and learning materials (as cited in Palfreyman and Smith, 2003).
Social constructivism greatly helps to understand a way through which individuals can acquire a second language. Notwithstanding, the social constructivism theory has also made a valuable contribution allowing better comprehension about the concept of learner autonomy. When one pictures a situation in which the learners work along with an educator, one might believe that in such a case the students’ autonomy is being jeopardized. Nonetheless, social constructivism dispels this misconception, as it highlights the tremendous importance of interdependence. Palfreyman and Smith (2003) define interdependence as the ability to take shared responsibility for learning. Even the aid provided by a professor is considered as a relevant component in student autonomy. Hence, student-student interaction and student-teacher interaction are as well vital factors for fostering learner autonomy. Besides, society has a considerable influence upon the development of student independence. A society in which autonomy is appreciated, the types of learning which lead to autonomy are facilitated (Lamb and Reinders, 2008). Unfortunately, this may be a serious issue in the Nicaraguan context, as in this country autonomy is not cherished in general, and even less in learning.

B. Communicative approach

At the very beginning of English teaching history, the grammar translation method was seemed to be flawless. Even though some educators used to point out its limitations, they may have been called heretic. Later, the direct method appeared as the best alternative, yet it was proceeded by the audio lingual method, which was the supreme method for English language teaching during a considerable period of time. This chain went on and on, one method displacing another one, afterwards being displaced by another method, and so on. Prator, who experienced those changes at first hand, arrived to the conclusion that no methodologist has the whole answer (as cited in Sullivan, 2002). Nonetheless, the Communicative Language Teaching is the predominant method in this beginning of the XXI century, for it continues to fulfill the needs that students have.
Communicative Language Teaching is originated from the necessity to develop communicative competences. Before CLT, learners were able to use the target language appropriately during the class; whereas, in real situations they were unable to communicate adequately. Afterwards, CLT proposed activities in which these real life situations are recreated. Further, Larsen (2000) shows that through those teaching strategies the pupils can negotiate meaning, as well as share their opinions, ideas and feelings. She also suggests that teachers ought to have less dominant roles, so that students can be more responsible for their own learning. Ergo, one can perceive that the communicative approach is based on student centeredness. However, there are obstacles which prevent the implementation of the communicative approach. The most frequent one is the increase of teacher-talking time throughout a lesson (Deckert, 2004). Teachers acting in that way may indicate that although they value the communicative approach, they still follow an old-fashioned philosophy of education.

Just like in the communicative approach, pupils in a student-centered course are very likely to become autonomous learners. Professors should give up some control in the class, yet they should not lose it; that is, they need to provide the students with more autonomy and control over their learning process (Zulkuf and Trombly, 2001). Additionally, the frequent obstacle to the implementation of the communicative approach also prevents the development of student autonomy. According to Malcolm and Rindfleisch (2003) teachers may feel awkward about relinquishing their traditional roles for spoon-feeding the students. As it has been previously stated, the professor’s authority is not frowned upon, yet it is understood in a fancier way, in which authentic teaching concerns legitimate fostering of learner independence. Finally, Kang (2007) recommends developing dynamic units in order to integrate the four language modalities communicatively, and through experiential learning promote student autonomy. In this way, pupils will be given not only an environment for meaningful communication, but also a place in which they can think critically.
The communicative approach can also be combined with other approaches and learning strategies for fostering learner autonomy. For instance, in Cooperative Learning, the pupils work on group projects. Within those groups, each learner is assigned a specific task. When a student fails in his/her task, the entire group suffers the consequence too. Hence, learner interdependence can be developed through cooperative learning. On the other hand, David Nunan (2003) has stated several steps to learner autonomy. He believes that the first step should be making instruction goals clear to the students, so that later they will be able to set their own objectives. Then, Nunan mentions the value of helping the learners to identify their own favorite styles and strategies. This step can be easily associated with the MI Theory.

In a nutshell, bearing in mind the fact that at the TEFL major the communicative approach, group work and student-centered classes are favored, in this environment the development of learner independence should be actively supported. Additionally, if the communicative approach and autonomous learning are in perfect harmony, students should be heading to the greatest facet of autonomy in learning and that is lifelong learning. Hence, the pupils will finally come to realize that the most important thing they could get from education is not a diploma or content knowledge, but their learning skills, which they can apply throughout their professional careers (Weimer, 2012).
V. Research Methodology

This section of the research paper contains a description of how the actual research was conducted. This research plan provides the following information: the type of research that was undertaken, an apt description of the participating students, professors and the coordinator of the TEFL major at UCA, and finally a report which informs how the different instruments were applied in order to obtain the precise data.

A. Type of research

Reflecting upon the diverse types of research, it was decided at first to use a qualitative research methodology; albeit, later a mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative was considered as the most optimal option. In this way, the socio-educational situation previously exposed not only could be understood, which according to Bricki (2007) it is the aim of qualitative research, but also be supported by numbers. Likewise, it was necessary that certain individuals involved in the TEFL major at UCA provided some valuable information in order to analyze and comprehend the learning problem that they were facing, which in this case was the development of learner autonomy. Thus, the research was based on the perceptions of such individuals for striving to establish the truth about learner autonomy in the context formerly mentioned.

B. Participants

1. Learners

In order to gather the information needed for this research, several sophomore TEFL students at UCA participated in the different instruments designed for collecting the relevant data. There are three groups of sophomore students; each group has more than 35 learners, except one which is composed of only 20 students. Further, at the time that the instruments were applied, all the sophomore students had already taken subjects like advanced grammar, conversation, reading & writing, which implied that they had to have a high level of proficiency. Also,
Universidad Centroamericana is considered as one the greatest educational institutions in which one can learn a foreign language. One of the major reasons is the preference in having student-centered classes. Those details indicated this was the optimal group for finding out the real case of the development of student autonomy in that major.

2. Professors and coordinator

Every educator who teaches at UCA is without a doubt a fully qualified professional. Besides, all the TEFL teachers are certified; indeed, some of them hold master degrees and count on various years of teaching experience. This means, the sophomore students' professors are the ideal experts for getting the job done. With regards to the coordinator of the TEFL major, Mrs. Obando, took charge in 2014. Although she is still young, she is very capable of performing competently in this position because of all the vast knowledge and energy that she possesses.

C. Technique to collect data

Since this is mixed methodology type of research, the data that needed to be generated had to be in the form of words and numbers. Consequently, research instruments such as class observations, surveys, questionnaires and interviews were used for collecting the aforementioned data. In this way, the information obtained from the instruments led to the accomplishment of the objectives of the research.

D. Instruments

1. Survey to the learners

From the three groups, a total of 20 individuals took part in this survey (Appendix I, Section A). For this instrument the learners had to answer ten questions. Before they proceeded to respond to the questions the learners were
told that the survey consisted of using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “not like me” and 5 being “very like me.” In this way, the aim of this research instrument was to measure students as autonomous learners.

2. Questionnaire to the learners

From the three groups, 16 students in total answered to questionnaire (Appendix III, Section B). This instrument was divided into two sections; the first one consisted of 6 closed questions about how the participants graded their level in the English language. The second section contained 3 open questions concerning learners’ limitations in the language, plans they had come up with to solve such problems, and their opinions about the idea of taking more English subjects. The learners were there for asked to elaborate on their responses, so that all this information could be analyzed in different ways.

3. Class observations

In order to understand, interpret and analyze the educational situation, it was fundamental to observe classes. Three class sessions were observed with the purpose of having a closer look at key factors in the development of student autonomy (Appendix VI). For instance, the application of the communicative approach was examined in regards with the cultivation of autonomous learners. During the class observations, it was possible to detect if learner autonomy was being fostered in the way that professors implemented the communicative approach. Also, attention was intently concentrated on the students’ reactions and attitudes towards learning and adopting a more independent role by being taught through the communicative approach.

4. Interviews with the professors and coordinator

For professor interviews (Appendix VII), educators were asked about their thoughts on the importance of fostering student autonomy. Likewise, they had to answer if the way they implemented the communicative approach helped the pupils to gain autonomy in their learning. Moreover, the coordinator also shared her
opinions about the value to the major for cultivating autonomous learners, and the potential benefits which could be derived from the achievement of lifelong learning.

E. Procedures

During the process of data collection, several instruments were applied in order to obtain as much information as possible. Also, since the information needed to be accurate, having numerous instruments facilitated the task. The first two instruments that were applied were the class observations and the surveys to the sophomore students. Then, the learners had to fill out a questionnaire, and finally the interviews to the professors and to the coordinator of the major were held.

The implementation of the first two instruments, the class observations, and the surveys took place almost simultaneously. There were times in which a class was first observed, and after a while the professor of the class allowed the researcher to distribute the surveys, so that the learners could respond to them. Whereas, there were other occasions that the learners participated in the survey first; after that, the remaining time for class was used for observation. Likewise, for the students to correctly respond to the surveys, the researcher read the survey to them, and if the learners had any doubt, they were encouraged to ask the researcher to clear out their confusion. In a very similar procedure, the completion of the questionnaire was reached. If a student had some sort of a query, the researcher was there to help him/her out.

In order to conduct the different interviews with the professors and the coordinator, the researcher went to the CSI, the most likely place where they could be found as long as they were not teaching or working on something else like carrying out administrative tasks. When the researcher found subjects that could provide precise information, they set a time for having the face-to-face in depth interview unless the interviewer had some spare time at the moment in which case the interview was conducted immediately.
F. Schedule to collect data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First class observation</td>
<td>September 28th, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second class observation</td>
<td>September 30th, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third class observation</td>
<td>October 5th, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey to the students</td>
<td>❖ September 28th, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❖ September 30th, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❖ October 5th, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire for the learners</td>
<td>❖ September 30th, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❖ October 5th, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with the professors</td>
<td>❖ September 30th, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❖ October 7th, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❖ October 8th, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the coordinator</td>
<td>October 2nd, 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G. Constraints

During the process of data collection, though there were not a lot of obstacles, still some difficulties were encountered. The major constraint was upon finding the right time to obtain the relevant information. The sophomore students did not take any subject worthy of observance during the May to August term for the subject of Proficiency; mainly due to a very mechanical and book bound approach carried out, as well as being the only class in English. In the following term, the schedules for the learners and the researcher were similar. The researcher therefore had to miss some of his classes in order to go observe the sophomores’ classes, and carry out the surveys as well as the questionnaires. The case was almost the same for the professors and coordinator interviews. It was difficult to find a convenient time that could work for the interviewees and the interviewer. The cause was always the same one, the interviewees and the interviewer had similar schedules.
for their classes. However, at the end everything worked out fine, as all the information needed could be obtained.
VI. Data analysis

A. Results

The analyses for this research were focused on the development of sophomore students as autonomous learners. For such studies, several aspects were taken into account; for instance, students’ self-evaluations regarding autonomy in learning, pupils’ attitudes towards taking responsibility for their learning, and the convenience of the communicative approach for leading to independence in learning; finally, the professors’ and coordinator’s thoughts on this topic and what actually happens in the TEFL major, specifically in the second year. Accordingly, the most relevant results obtained from the several sources are presented up next.

1. Results from the surveys

This type of survey (see Appendix I, Section B) was aimed for the sophomore TEFL students to self-evaluate their degree of autonomy in learning. Out of the 10 questions from the survey, only 7 seven of them showed the most relevant results for this research. For the first question 95% of the pupils answered they truthfully enjoyed new learning experiences, and only 5% of them replied they were not satisfied with new learning experiences. Question number two had also a pretty positive result with 60% of the students claiming they were open to new ways of doing familiar things. Just 40% of the learners were not certain. Also, for the next query, the statistics were very similar, but now it was a 50-50 the enjoyment of challenges. In contrast, the results from the fifth question showed that merely 45% of the learners thoroughly enjoyed finding information about new topics on their own, yet the majority, in this case 55% of those participants, were not deeply interested in carrying out the task. The answers from the following query presented that barely 40% of the partakers declared their time management was acceptable; consequently, a vast 60% of the students did not assert their time management as highly efficient. On the other hand, for question number eight, 65% of the pupils replied they were good at meeting deadlines, so the rest of them, which was the 35%, answered they were not quite good at summiting assignments on time. At last, similar to the results from the first query, 85% of the sophomore TEFL
students who participated in these surveys shared that they were happy to work on their own, and only 15% of them were not extremely glad about working alone.

2. Results from the questionnaires

In the first part of the questionnaire (Appendix III, Section B), the pupils had to self-evaluate their level in the four language modalities, and in the sub-skill which was grammar. For this sub-skill, 37% of the participants claimed to have a pretty good level, the other 44% a satisfactory level, and the rest, which was the 19% of the pupils, graded their level as not that good. The following query was about the listening skill, to which half of the participants responded they were extremely competent at it; however, the other 50% classified their listening skill as not that great. The next skill in question was a productive one, only 37% of the learners graded their speaking skill at a high level, and the majority of them, in this scenario the 63%, did not rank their proficiency for this language modality at those high levels. Then, it was turn for the second year TEFL students to grade their reading skill. An outright 63% of the participants claimed to have a decent level for this receptive skill, and the other 37% declared that their reading skill was beyond. For the last language modality, writing, only 18% of the students graded it as pretty good, an overwhelming 69% believed their writing skill is good, and just 13% of the pupils were not firmly convinced of their level of the writing skill. Then, the learners were to check the skill or sub-skill that was the most difficult to them. Further, for this question the participants could check more than one item. There was a great variety in the results; nevertheless, speaking turned out to be the hardest skill or sub-skill for 50% of the pupils. Writing was next with 44%, followed by Grammar and Listening, both with 31%, and finally Reading barely reaching 13%.

The second part of the questionnaires consisted of the participants answering some open questions, in which they needed to elaborate on their responses. The three open questions were to address the pupils’ limitations in the foreign language, the plans they had come up with for overcoming such deficiencies, and their thoughts on the necessity of taking more subjects in order to
achieve a better level of proficiency in the English language. For the first query, flaws in speaking were chosen as the major limitation the learners in their English with 31% in the results. Then, flaws in writing with 23%, a limited Vocabulary and flaws in listening both with 15%, grammatical mistakes with 8%, and the last 8% of the participants believed to have no flaws in the foreign language. On the other hand, in the responses for the following question only 37.5% of the students had detailed plans for removing their limitations in the language. At last, the large quantity of 69% of the learners replied they would consider necessary taking more subjects for enhancing their English level of proficiency.

3. Results from the class observations

The class observations were exceptionally valuable instruments (Appendix VI), which made possible examining what actually occurs in the context already mentioned. First of all, from the three observations it could be noticed that the communicative approach made the students have a good level of motivation. Likewise, by taking notes and paying attention to their professors, almost all the pupils were focused on the lessons. Albeit, whenever the teacher talking time took a lot of minutes, some students seemed to be bored, yet others kept on paying attention to the professors’ explanations. Also, there were some situations in which the learners were not quite clear about a lesson; to take an instance; they confused thesis statement with the topic of an essay. Moreover, after the professor had given the instructions, it was time to observe the learner-learner interaction. Many times, pupils were working in groups in order to complete an assigned task. When the professors walked around the classroom, they were frequently asked for help; they had to usually explain the instructions twice, a concept, or an unknown word from the reading. Even if a student had a dictionary, that pupil asked the teacher for the meaning of a word. With regards to participation, almost always the same four students responded to the questions asked by the educators. During the observations some mistakes while speaking were also made by the pupils. Mainly, there were some mistakes with collocations, stress, and word order in questions. Finally, most of the students had difficulties doing their homework. One time the
homework was to write a thesis statement, the other time it was about writing an argumentative essay, and in both occasions the majority of the learners failed to hand in the assignment.

4. Results from the interviews

In these interviews (Appendix VI), three professors who have already taught the sophomore TEFL students, a professor of Academic Writing, and one professor of Advanced Conversation and another one of Advanced Grammar, responded to several open questions regarding different factors related to learner autonomy. In the first question, the educators were asked about the relevance of fostering student independence in their classes. All the three educators had very similar responses, in which they told that they adopt the role of a facilitator; accordingly, they do not give all the answers to the pupils. As a matter of fact, the professor of Advanced Grammar went beyond and claimed that promoting learner independence is truthfully important for administrative aspects, since there is not enough time to cover all the content just with the class hours. At the end, the educator finished saying the cultivation of autonomous learner really enhances knowledge.

The second query could have been harsh to answer, but still two professors admitted that in their classes there is absence of autonomous learners. They declared that the education system, especially the one from high schools, causes that the learners get used to the teacher having absolute control in the classes; thus, without that guidance from the educator, the students feel completely lost and are not capable of doing anything about it. They also shared that cultivating independent learners is a complex task, for the pupils resist to taking the responsibility for their own learning; besides, they have to go through a procedure for unlearning and relearning. Also a professor mentioned that having big groups in the major does not facilitate the development of student independence. Afterwards, another professor accepted that generally they do not teach the TEFL students to be autonomous learners; notwithstanding, later he expressed that the circumstances have been changing, and learner autonomy is being pursued.
Likewise, the other professor commented something pretty similar about UCA talking about these changes for years, but the transition does not happen all of a sudden. He went on saying education is a long term process, and results do not occur immediately. In contrast, a third professor confessed to feeling satisfied with the amount of autonomous learners that are in his class. Additionally, he explained that perhaps many of his pupils just limit to carry out the duties, yet 30% of them do a great job.

The next question was about allowing the students to have a voice in the control over the learning process, and the replies varied tremendously. One professor talked about focusing on developing critical thinking, and let the students express their opinions. He affirmed that sometimes he could hurt the learners, challenge them, so that they would look for the answers on their own. A second educator expressed to follow a research process, and have the students in groups discussing and sharing knowledge. The last professor revealed having learners taking a diagnostic test at the beginning of a course; allowing him to know what they ultimately needed and wanted. Then, he would provide some information, so afterwards the pupils went to investigate. Nevertheless, he claimed that working like that is a challenge for him because there are times in which he does not know where the class is going.

The answers for the next question were kind of identical. The professors confessed that the sophomore students have problems with coherence. Connecting the ideas is an issue for those learners. Likewise, the educator reported there were difficulties in fluency, vocabulary, collocations, phrasal verbs and verb tenses. Furthermore, one of the professors concluded saying it is crucial to insist on self-study.

Query number five was a meaningful one, for the communicative approach was questioned for facilitating the development of learner autonomy. First, one of the professor answered that it helps building up a perspective; by the interacting, expressing and exchanging ideas, the learners can grow. Another professor declared that approach is not just about communication, but also about facilitating
learning. He added it provokes changes in attitude, and it gives control over life. On the other hand, a third professor criticized the way this approach was implemented. He mentioned some professor have become entertainers, easy graders, and they over use games. Later, he suggested that a balance needs to be sought. The last two questions were about other approaches, teaching methods and teaching strategies which could help find the way to student independence. An educator replied that he diagnoses what the group needs, and then implement activities to promote thinking. Another professor claimed that areas like Reading, Writing, and Grammar should not be disregarded, and that reading should start from the beginning. The last one affirmed to use an eclectic methodology with a variety of alternatives that can help the learner understand and feel comfortable and motivated. He also shared that he incorporates culture, bring guests, and organizes fieldtrips in which relevant information can be found.

The following results to be presented come from the interview to the coordinator of the TEFL major at UCA, professor Kenia Obando. For the first question, the coordinator had to answer if it is relevant to the major the cultivation of independent student. She firmly replied that it is very relevant. She continued explaining learning a language relies on the environment, students’ responsibilities and strategies because the class hours are not enough, working at home, learning more vocabulary, trying to enhance fluency, all of that is absolutely vital. In the second query, she shared that professors from the TEFL major invite the pupils to practice their English at home every day. Albeit, professor Obando confessed that the education system does not develop learner autonomy. She kept saying on even though one can study on his/her own, it is better to have a guide; hence, some types of guide for self-study are urgently needed; also, in this way the students will become more dependent on those guides, rather than on the teachers. Another idea she shared, was that commitment of institutes and authorities and more funding should be invested in training teachers, providing them with strategies, or assigning tasks that do not require professors. For the last question, professor Obando talked about CAP (Curso de actualización profesional) specifically about the success of Teaching children methodology.
Then, she accepted that the major does not prepare the pupils for lifelong learning, yet it gives the students the tools for dealing with big groups, time etc.

**B. Discussion**

This section of the research paper contains the interpretation of the most significant results obtained from the surveys, questionnaires, class observations and interviews.

To start off, there are some discrepancies between the results obtained from the instruments to collect data. For example, 65% of the learners claimed they were very good at meeting deadlines (Appendix II); nonetheless, in the previous question (Appendix I, Section A, Question 7), 60% of them recognized that their time management was not fully efficient. This difference in percentages does not represent logic; as one cannot easily meet deadlines when mismanaging time. Likewise, from a class session, it was observed that the majority of the pupils did not hand in a simple homework the day that it was due. In another class, the second year TEFL learners had not finished writing their argumentative essays, so the deadline had to be postponed. One can clearly see that self-evaluation sometimes tends to be vulnerable to unreliability (Brown, 2004). This situation is negative for the development of student independence, since as Watson asserts (2002), conducting reliable self-assessment is a prerequisite for self-directed learners. This lack of proper self-assessment is evidence of the student focus needed in order for them to become successful independent learners. In addition, there was also lack of consistency in the responses to the questions from the questionnaires. For instance, there was a student who had marked that his listening skill was pretty good; however, then he marked that listening was the most difficult skill for him/her. Another learner graded his/her speaking skill was excellent; nevertheless, later he answered in a different question that one of his weaknesses was in pronunciation.

Fortunately, there were parts of the questionnaires in which the pupils were consistent with their responses. As an illustration, for the question about Speaking,
most students replied that they were not that great at this skill. Later, in the query about the most difficult skill or sub-skill, the majority of the learners also answered that Speaking was the most difficult skill for them (Appendix IV). Thus, the results from the self-assessments conducted by the students in certain areas ensure reliability.

Another important detail which is present in the questionnaires is the mistakes in writing. Many pupils made some serious mistakes while answering this type of instrument. For instance, mistakes with verb forms: “I can found, I haven’t spend, we should be focus, for improve my English.” One student had problem with tenses agreement, “I often have problems in pronunciation or I confused the meaning.” Collocation was another issue not only in writing, but it was also present in the class observations during the students talking time. For example, a pupil gave the next statement, “I have many mistakes when I speak.” It is evident that the professors would correct some of those mistakes because students have gone through a long time learning the language before, and the purpose of their classes at this time is different. Moreover, a professor declared in one of the interviews that it is crucial to insist on self-study, which could lead to the idea that now it is up to the learner to self-correct those mistakes. Nevertheless, some answers from the questionnaires show that the sophomore TEFL students do not think that way, as 62.5% of them have not come up with firm plans to overcome their weaknesses in the foreign language (Appendix V). In contrast, almost 70% of the learners would love the idea of taking more subjects that can help them to improve their English level of proficiency. If a vast number of students think this way, they are probably not taking advantages of the different sources available for learning inside or outside the classroom, and this is a fundamental characteristic of an autonomous learner. As a result, it is worthy to note a correlation between the negative aspects stated in this section with the issues highlighted in the Justification section. Because nothing has been done by the majority of students to overcome these major issues, a large problem exists in their English language skills.
With regards to the communicative approach, the theory that was stated in the theoretical framework at a great extend occurs in the reality of this context. Also, it is important to remember that a professor claimed the communicative approach helps to develop critical thinking and build up a perspective. To tell the truth, this was also observed in the classes, students having discussions, exchanging ideas, backing up their arguments, etc. In the same way, this environment also provides the learners with high motivation, not only because of that, but also because the communicative approach facilitates the implementation of a large variety of teaching strategies, which help the pupils to identify their preferences in learning. Albeit, there are some obstacles for the cultivation of autonomy in the classes in which this approach is applied. For one thing, the fact that the sophomore students do not hand in their assignments on time, indicates they might not be working at home, so they do not continue take their learning outside the classroom. As a consequence, the learners’ level of self-motivation is low. On the other hand, in the class observations it was noticed that a professor might try to resist spoon-feeding the students, yet the learners do want to be spoon-fed. At the end, the pupils very often “get their way.” As a result, the degree of responsibility for learning shared by educator and students is not balanced. The learners are dependent on the professor rather than interdependent. Additionally, in the interviews, the professors explained that the pupils need a lot of guidance from the educators because they come from classes in which they got used to working with controller teachers. Under the circumstances that the education system from high schools is accompanied by a culture in which autonomy is not especially relevant; the development of student independence is not being facilitated.

Some administrative factors also pose obstacles for the cultivation of autonomous learners. Even though cooperative learning reduces the teachers' workload, during the interviews the professors complained about the class sizes and that having big groups makes the promotion of student autonomy difficult. Furthermore, the professors and the coordinator acknowledged that class hours are not enough, so students have a lot of work to do on their own and outside the
classroom. Unfortunately, the learners do not have either the level of self-motivation, or a plan for assuming those types of responsibilities.
VII. Conclusion

At some point, it is imperative that a student gains autonomy in learning. Even language learners ought to go beyond the class hours in order to enrich their foreign language. This duty becomes a primary one for TEFL students because one day they will be teaching English; therefore, they need to develop as highly competent in this language as possible. Based on the results previously presented, one can determine that the communicative approach and the students’ attitudes have a good influence over the development of learner autonomy of the sophomore TEFL students, yet that influence is not enough because there is an important amount of pupils who still needs to achieve a greater degree of autonomy in learning.

It was evident that the communicative approach provided the learners with a nice environment in which they could communicate meaningfully and think critically; thus, their level of motivation was decent. Moreover, professors did strive to play less dominant roles, pupils at certain moments seemed to be responsible for their own learning, but still they showed some deficiency in their English. Based on the results gotten from the research instruments, it could be determined that around 30% of the sophomore students appeared to possess different characteristics of an autonomous learner. Nevertheless, about 70% of the pupils did not resemble independent students, especially when assuming the responsibility for their learning outside the classroom. This could be caused by their level of self-motivation being quite low. In addition, it is worth mentioning that a new curriculum will be implemented soon, and this is aimed to help the future TEFL students reach a high level of proficiency in the 4 skills and the other sub-skills. After, the current curriculum is still being implemented for a couple of years; consequently, the problem arises for the present sophomore students who still have some limitations in their English and lack of a plan to overcome them.

To sum up, learner autonomy is not that strong in this context; accordingly, for accomplishing lifelong learning, it is a longer way. Nonetheless, there is absolutely no doubt that the TEFL major at UCA is the best place where a person can
become a highly competent EFL teacher. Even though nothing will be ever flawless, why cannot this major be even better?
VIII. Recommendations

An important aspect of a sophomore student’s progress is in accurately knowing their needs through both unified and personal assessment. Unified assessment is comprised of standardized tests that allow one to determine strengths and weaknesses drawing comparison to one’s peers. Personal assessment, by its nature, is more determining of individual needs focused on personalizing a program to improve student weaknesses; this can be done through personal interview and essay writing among others. The proper assessment is detrimental for maximizing student progress and for determining methodologies and techniques that will yield maximum results. It is highly recommended that this assessment is carried out at the start of the sophomore year giving us a course of action to follow.

After attaining the assessment results, both a comprehensible and comprehensive study plan can be implemented. In order to motivate the student we need to instill measures that are helpful to them in acquiring the desired knowledge for forming a highly qualified professional. The use of a tangible written and signed contract under these circumstances lends credibility, not to mention awareness by both the student and the teacher as to what is expected when forming a professional and competent teacher by being self-reliant. Contracts should vary in accordance to student abilities and desires, allowing for success as opposed to failure. The contract context will be carried out by students outside the classroom which will motivate independence and a result oriented attitude, much like the one every English teacher needs to instill in every English student during the learning exchange process. The contract tasks and goals are on a one to one basis between the teacher and the student, the latter being the one to determine the level of commitment. The teacher can of course give proper feedback on contract content once they know the underlying motives a student may have for completing their education. This feedback needs to include benefits for continuous improvement in the student by applying suggestions and recommendations given to their everyday scenario. For example, the reviewing of an essay should not just
encompass mechanical and grammatical comments, but also allow for the student to progress with the usage of such feedback in daily life. For the best execution and implementation of desired student goals the contract needs to be monitored in a timely manner permitting flexibility.

With the accurate results of the assessment process we can determine the competence level of each student qualifying some to be tutors and others that will be tutees. The first group, tutors, will receive the invaluable experience of passing along their knowledge with all the rigors that come from teaching, thus enabling themselves to prepare for the challenge that is language acquisition. The tutee on the other hand receives the necessary instruction and feedback that will raise their English language proficiency at all levels and skills. Furthermore, the tutor will develop an auto-correction-thought process due to the mindset required to observe mistake, error and weakness in tutees. The tutee will also benefit from teacher independence by having a tutor to rely on for desired knowledge and review of difficult subject matter as well as the monitoring of the desired progress as stipulated in the agreed upon contract.

Teachers need to emphasize and instill the importance of group work in every student. It is necessary that teachers monitor group work firsthand, not doing this permits for some students to receive credit for work when they shouldn’t; creating falsehood in the preparedness of a future teacher. Teachers need to take a more “hands-on” approach when assigning group work and demand that every student in a group can stand alone in applying and explaining acquired knowledge, doing away with students referred to as “hitchhikers” when doing group work. This can be attained by individually probing members as to their actual participation, and how they connect to other members. A teamwork concept is greatly reinforced when one team member’s failure affects the rest of the members, allowing for parity in the responsibilities shared in the acquired knowledge of each team member.
References


Appendix I

A. Survey

The purpose of this survey consists of gathering valuable information about the senior TEFL students at UCA as autonomous learners. Thus, your cooperation is truly appreciated.

On a scale from 1 to 5, with one being “not at all like me,” and 5 being “very much like me,” please answer the following questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do I enjoy new learning experiences?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I open to new ways of doing familiar things?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I enjoy challenges?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I enjoy finding information about new topics on my own?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I stick with tasks which are difficult?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I take responsibility for my learning experiences?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is my time management good?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I good at meeting deadlines?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I plan my time effectively for studying?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I happy to work on my own?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thanks for participating in the survey!
B. Results from the survey

1. Do I enjoy new learning experiences?
   Very like me 95%  
   Kind of like me 5%  
   Not at all like me 0%

2. Am I open to new ways of doing familiar things?
   Very like me 60%  
   Kind of like me 35%  
   Not at all like me 5%

3. Do I enjoy challenges?
   Very like me 50%  
   Kind of like me 40%  
   Not at all like me 10%

4. Do I enjoy finding information about new topics on my own?
   Very like me 80%  
   Kind of like me 15%  
   Not at all like me 5%

5. Do I stick with tasks which are difficult?
   Very like me 45%  
   Kind of like me 40%  
   Not at all like me 15%

6. Do I take responsibility for my learning experiences?
   Very like me 80%  
   Kind of like me 20%  
   Not at all like me 0%

7. Is my time management good?
   Very like me 40%  
   Kind of like me 50%  
   Not at all like me 10%

8. Am I good at meeting deadlines?
   Very like me 65%  
   Kind of like me 30%  
   Not at all like me 5%

9. Do I plan my time effectively for studying?
   Very like me 65%  
   Kind of like me 30%  
   Not at all like me 5%

10. Am I happy to work on my own?
    Very like me 85  
    Kind of like me 15%  
    Not at all like me 0%
Appendix III

A. Questionnaire

The objective of this questionnaire is to obtain relevant information in regards to the sophomore TEFL students' English level of proficiency. Hence, your cooperation will be truly appreciated.

How do I grade the level of my

- Grammar
  Not that good ___  Good___  Pretty good___  Excellent___

- Listening skill
  Not that good___  Good___  Pretty good___  Excellent___

- Speaking skill
  Not that good___  Good___  Pretty good___  Excellent___

- Reading skill
  Not that good___  Good___  Pretty good___  Excellent___

- Writing skill
  Not that good___  Good___  Pretty good___  Excellent___

Which is/are the most difficult skills or sub-kill for me? You can check more than one.

  Grammar___  Listening___  Speaking___  Reading___

  Writing___

Do I have any flaws in my English or is it flawless? Justify.

What have I planned to overcome such deficiencies?
Would I consider necessary taking more subjects in which I could raise my English level of proficiency? Justify.

Thanks for taking your time to answer this questionnaire!
B. Results from the questionnaire

How do I grade the level of my

- Grammar
  - Not that good 19%  
  - Good 44%  
  - Pretty good 37%
  - Excellent 0%

- Listening skill
  - Not that good 13%
  - Good 37%
  - Pretty good 44%
  - Excellent 6%

- Speaking skill
  - Not that good 25%
  - Good 38%
  - Pretty good 31%
  - Excellent 6%

- Reading skill
  - Not that good 0%
  - Good 63%
  - Pretty good 37%
  - Excellent 0%

- Writing skill
  - Not that good 13%
  - Good 69%
  - Pretty good 18%
  - Excellent 0%

Which is/are the most difficult skills or sub-skill for me? You can check more than one.

- Grammar 31%
- Listening 31%
- Speaking 50%
- Reading 13%
- Writing 44%
### Appendix VI

#### Class observation form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of the communicative approach</td>
<td>Learner-learner interaction, they worked in groups in order to complete the assigned tasks.</td>
<td>Its implementation provided Students with an acceptable level of motivation, and let them have a place for expressing their opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners’ attitudes</td>
<td>Learners took notes, paid attention to the class, worked in small groups. At other times, some of them lost interest in the class. Certain learners were too dependent on the teacher.</td>
<td>They usually stopped paying attention to the class whenever the teacher-talking-time took a lot of minutes. They asked for the meaning of unknown words, even when they had access to a dictionary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners aptitudes</td>
<td>They made mistakes as they spoke. They were not able to do their homework. They did not manage simple concepts they should master.</td>
<td>There were mistakes with collocations, stress, and word order in questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They had a lot of trouble figuring how to write a thesis statement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Appendix VII

Guide for the interviews

The first interview has as participants the professors of the senior TEFL students at UCA. It is aimed to collect information about the professors’ thoughts on learner autonomy; consequently, the next questions will be addressed:

1. Do you find important fostering learner autonomy in your classes?

2. Do you think you have a good amount of autonomous learners in them?

3. How do you allow your students to have a voice regarding the control over their learning process?

4. How does the communicative approach facilitate student independence?

5. What other approaches or teaching methods do you use to foster learner autonomy?

6. What are the best teaching strategies for fostering student independence?

The second interview has as participant the director of the TEFL major at UCA. The objective of this interview is to obtain information about the role of learner autonomy within that major; therefore, the following questions will be asked:

1. Is it relevant to the major the cultivation of autonomous learners?

2. How is student independence promoted in the major?

3. Does the major prepare the pupils for lifelong learning?
Appendix II

The following graphics show discrepancies between the responses for questions 7 and 8 from the survey.

**Time management**

Barely 40% of the partakers declared their time management was acceptable; consequently, a vast 60% of the students did not assert their time management as...

**Meeting deadlines**

65% of the pupils replied they were good at meeting deadlines, so the rest of them, which was the 35%, answered they were not quite good at summiting...
Appendix IV

The following graphics display consistency from students with the answers from the questionnaire about how they grade their speaking skill, and which is the most difficult skill for them.

**Speaking skill**

Only 37% of the learners graded their speaking skill at a high level, and the majority of them, in this scenario the 63%, did not rank their proficiency for this language modality at those high levels.

**The most difficult skills or sub-skill**

Speaking turned out to be the hardest skill or sub-skill for the 50% of the pupils. Writing with 44% was the one that followed in the results; next, Grammar and Listening both with 31%, and finally...
Appendix V

The next graphics contain the percentages of students with a solid plan to continue improving their English on their own, and learners who would be seriously interested in taking more English subjects to accomplish such improvement.

**Students' plan**

- Students without a concrete plan: 62.5%
- Students with a concrete plan: 37.5%

*62.5% of the learners have not come up with firm plans to overcome their weaknesses in the foreign language*

**English subjects**

- Students pro more English subjects: 65%
- Students against more English subjects: 35%

*Almost 70% of the learners would love the idea of taking more subjects that can help them to raise their English level of proficiency.*