Key Conceptions on Learner Autonomy and Particular Links with the Algerian Educational Context

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Abstract
In the last three decades, the construct of learner autonomy has been a voguish word in the educational literature. It has been explored from a variety of perspectives and spheres, for it is a multifaceted notion that involves several parameters and tenets such as: taking control over learning, assuming responsibility, conducting independent action and exercising the freedom of choice. Its convolution, indeed, has yielded multiple directions that led to a great deal of discussion and research. However, a clear depiction of what 'learner autonomy' is and what it essentially conceals is not well represented. Hence, this paper aims at providing a clear account and a relevant review of the significant conceptions embedded within the term so as to gain a deeper understanding of it. To this end, the paper tackles the following issues: (1) the origins of autonomy (2) learner autonomy definitions (3) versions of learner autonomy (4) learner autonomy and its relation to teacher autonomy (5) and finally learner autonomy across cultures, as it puts forward important associations to the Algerian educational setting.
Key words: Algerian context, culture, language learning, learner autonomy, teacher autonomy

Introduction

Learner autonomy came into sight whilst a wave of educational thoughts called for a shift of focus from the teacher to the learner. It has intrigued several scholars and thus has generated a countless number of theoretical and empirical works that are still in progress. In its basic sense, learner autonomy is a learner centered notion that puts the student at the heart of the learning experience, it engages fundamentally self-reliance, self-instruction, self-access, and self-sufficiency. Plus, it endows the student with responsibility over his learning, decisions and actions, as it engages a capacity for detachment and critical reflection. It is not merely a significant theoretical construct in the literature but a worthwhile estimated goal across worldwide language classrooms.

1. A Brief Background of Learner Autonomy

Autonomy is a word that dates back to the end of the 16th century, it was first used in the European political framework, Berka (2000). It springs from the ancient Greek word '*autonomia*' which is a combination of '*autos*' and '*nomos*'. The former signifying 'self' and the latter 'law'. Their meanings together have been interpreted as ' living according to one's own rules' or 'setting one's own laws'. Historically, autonomy was not inherent in the field language education; "rather, it is an imported, essentially non-linguistic, concept that has been brought into language teaching, via psychology and educational theory from the fields of moral and political philosophy." (Benson, 2009, p. 16). At its very first use, that is in the end of the 16th century, autonomy was initially a political notion, which served as a 'killer phrase' that indicated an illegitimate wish for religious freedom and freedom of the mind, Berka (2000). It was seen as a disruptive concept that may result in people breaking out the laws and escaping the legitimate power. However, some decades later, it became more common and 'legal', since it had come to refer to the individual's ability to take control of his own affairs by treaty (ibid).

With respect to education, autonomy had long been, highly valued and recognized as a learning principle. Comenius (1592-1670)*,* 'the father of modern education', notably had put children at the center of learning and stressed the importance of their autonomy. According to him, children are naturally born with a desire to search for knowledge, so teachers should consider this nature to support their innate development. Rousseau (1712- 1778), on the other hand, through his famous treatise Emile (first published in 1762)*,* advocated the view of respecting children's natural inclination to learning*,* and put forward that a child learns better when he is curious about something*.* This makes him excited and passionate to learn it, and therefore he will be able to educate himself. Rousseau's child-centered educational theory has eventually laid a sound foundation to learner autonomy, since his thoughts were adopted by many influential theorists who traced the path of autonomy in education such as: John Dewey (1859-1952), Jean Piaget (1896-1980), Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) and Carl Rogers (1902-1987).

 2. What Is Learner Autonomy?

One of the most trashed out questions in the abundant body of literature is defining the construct of 'learner autonomy' for it has been regarded as a highly intricate and multidimensional construct whose systematic accounts can be approached from divergent perspectives (Knapp & Seidlhofer & Widdowson 2009). For example, Holec (1981) who is said to be the father of autonomy in language learning, views it as a capacity to take charge of the learning process:

to say of a learner that he is autonomous is…to say that he is capable of taking charge of his own learning and nothing more…to take charge of one's learning is to bear responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning. (As cited in Benson, 2013, p. 59).

In a similar way, Cotterall (1995) defines it "as the extent to which learners demonstrate the ability to use a set of tactics for taking control of their learning" (p. 195). Benson (2001) also seems to share this conception: "Autonomy is the capacity to take control of one's own learning" (p. 47). Little (1991) on the other hand, brought the psychological dimension into light by regarding the autonomous learner not just as being capable to manage his own learning, but also as competent enough to associate the acquired knowledge with his actual environment. In this way, "the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of learning" (Little, 1990, p. 7).

In Little's (1991) view, this psychological relation to how and what is learnt, boosts the learner's capacity to take control over their language learning. Whereas for Dickinson (1987) learner autonomy is conceived as a *learning situation* "in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions" and that involves "complete responsibility for one's learning, carried out without the involvement of a teacher or pedagogic materials" (1987, p. 11). To Dickinson (1987) partial responsibility for decision making and learning management is not autonomy; it is rather a preparatory stage for an autonomy labeled semi-autonomy.

However, Benson (2001) and Kohonen, (1992) views do not seem to concur with Dickinson's individualistic interpretation that discounts the socio-interactive aspect of learning, for they maintain that learners' interdependence is a necessary component in developing autonomous language learning. Benson (1996) argues that control over learning cannot be reached individually, it rather entails a cooperative decision making (p.33). In addition, Little (2004) maintains that "Autonomy is not synonymous with autism: it is not a matter of learners working on their own; like all other culturally determined human capacities, it develops in interaction with others" (2004, p.17). Furthermore, Dam (1995) believes that autonomy entails "a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a socially responsible person" (p. 102). Accordingly, autonomous language learning involves not only capabilities and individualistic attitudes to learning, but requires also a collaborative learning network that helps learners to use and reinforce their capacities within and beyond their immediate learning context.

3. Versions of Learner Autonomy

In the last couple of decades, several scholars brought into the literature an assortment of versions and ways of examining the construct of autonomy; such as Benson (1997), Oxford (2003), Smith, (2003), Kumaravadivelu, (2003), and Holliday (2003). Each version is driven by distinct assumptions on the conceptualization of this notion. Table 1 illustrates different versions and their basic components:

Table 1: *Versions of autonomy*

Benson (1997)	Oxford (2003)	Smith (2003)	Kumaravadivelu (2003)	Holliday (2003)
1.Technical: Learning management 2. Psychological: cognitive processes 3. Political: control over learning	1.Technical: focus on the physical situation 2.Psychological: characteristics of learners 3. Socio-cultural: focus on mediated learning 4. Political-critical: focus on ideologies, access, and power structure	1.Weak pedagogies: students lack autonomy 2. Strong pedagogies: students are autonomous	1.Narrowautonomy: academic autonomy 2. Broad autonomy: libratory autonomy	1.Native–speakerist: students are outsiders to the native speakers' culture 2.Cultural–relativist: autonomy is a Western construct 3. Social autonomy: autonomy is a social phenomenon

4. a. Benson (1997)

At the start, Benson (1997) pioneered the discussion of different versions of autonomy in the theoretical literature of language learning. He distinguished between three diverse perspectives from which the concept of autonomy can be examined; technical, psychological, and political. The technical version is concerned with the learner training and learning strategies. It focuses on the technical skills required to manage an autonomous learning within and beyond the classroom setting, yet, without teacher intervention. Benson associated this version with 'positivistic' approach to language learning, because the latter supports independent language acquisition rather than "direct transmission from teacher to learner" (Benson, 1997, p. 23), as it encourages drill and practice methods to language learning**.**
The psychological version, on the contrary, considers the learner's internal mental capacities, attitudes, and behaviors, it holds that learners' knowledge is constructed within their own social world, jointly with their teachers. This eventually leads to take a shared responsibility for learning between teacher and learner. In view of that, this version is constant with basic thoughts of the 'constructivist' approach to language learning, which attaches great importance to individual responsibility for decision-making on learning and "tend to value interaction and engagement with the target language" (Benson, 1997, p. 24).

Finally, the political version refers to learners' control over the internal and external learning contexts, the learning content and processes as well as their right to do so. Besides, it emphasizes on second language learners' critical awareness of the social context, and calls attention to the potential hurdles between learners and the target language community. This version, as suggested by Benson, corresponds to the critical theory of knowledge which presumes the crucial impact of political and social ideologies on knowledge construction and deals with issues of control, power and social change.

By implication, Benson's three versions of learner autonomy can be analyzed and examined in different ways according to different contexts and purposes. If learning is viewed as the acquisition of the immediate necessary skills to gain knowledge, then the technical version of autonomy will seem appropriate and more likely to be selected. But, in contexts where learning

is seen as an individual or social construction of meaning, the psychological version tends to serve better the research ends. Lastly, when there is a focus on the socio-political dimensions of learning, the political version should preferably manifest.

4.b. Oxford (2003) and Smith (2003)

Subsequently, Oxford (2003) recognized Benson's technical, psychological, and political versions of autonomy and extended the model by adding a further dimension; the 'socio-cultural' perspective. It recognizes that autonomous learning is a 'socially mediated' process that can be promoted through shared interactions among learners, as well as practical integration with their social and cultural context. Smith (2003) on the other hand, in conceptualizing the term, made a different twofold division; weak pedagogies and strong pedagogies. In the former, "…autonomy is seen as a deferred goal and as a product of instruction rather than as something which students are currently ready to exercise directly" (Smith, 2003, p. 131). It presupposes students' low level of capacity to direct their own language learning autonomously. It intends to provide them with the appropriate strategies that help them become autonomous in fulfilling objectives that are set by their institution. Because, curriculum and syllabus design are created by the instructors or the institution, leaving very little room for learners to make choices and decisions.

This type of autonomy can be linked to Benson's technical version of autonomy given that they both contend with learning strategies to promote autonomy. By contrast, the latter focuses on "co-creating with students optimal conditions for the exercise of their autonomy" (Smith, 2003, p. 131). In this kind of autonomy, learners are seen as already autonomous and capable to cooperate with their teachers in fundamental decision making processes such as syllabus design. In this way, they become active participants who play a crucial role in the creation of a self-directed learning space. With an involvement of collaboration and interaction, Smith's strong pedagogy can, in turn, be associated with Oxford's socio-cultural version of autonomy.

4. c. Kumaravadivelu (2003)

Kumaravadivelu (2003) made a distinction between narrow and broad approaches to autonomy; the difference between the two versions lies in outlining the goal of learner autonomy. The narrow form sustains that autonomy in learning is meant to help students to *learn how to learn* by providing them with the essential resources to learn on their own and by teaching them how to use suitable cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies to accomplish their learning objectives, it is referred to as 'academic' autonomy. Whereas in the broad version, the goal of learner autonomy is directed towards *learning to liberate,* therefore, it is called 'liberatory' autonomy. In essence, this type of autonomy "...actively seeks to help learners recognize sociopolitical impediments to realization of their full human potential and by providing them with the intellectual tools necessary to overcome those impediments" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p.547). Distinct from academic autonomy, where learning to learn is seen as an end in itself, liberatory autonomy regards learning to learn merely as a means to an end (which is learning for liberation). In this respect, Kumaravadivelu (2006) argues "if academic autonomy enables learners to be effective learners, liberatory autonomy empowers them to be critical thinkers".

4. d. Holliday (2003)

From a distinctive perspective, Holliday (2003) categorized three other approaches to autonomy namely; 'native–speakerist', 'cultural–relativist' and 'social' autonomy. In the native-

speakerist approach, learners are perceived as culturally outsiders to their 'native speaker' teachers' own culture, and autonomous learners are expected to perform in ways that "conform to an image of the native speaker and his or her culture" (Holliday, 2003, p. 115). In the cultural relativist approach, autonomy is represented as a Western construct that should not be embraced by non-native learners due to their cultural non-conformity. Holliday associated this version with Benson's political autonomy which is concerned with issues of power. While the first two approaches are culture-related, the third category i.e. social autonomy characterizes autonomy as "a pre-existing social phenomenon" that perceives members of the society as equal people (Holliday, 2003, p. 118). It considers autonomy as a universal concept that is inherent in all members of the society regardless of their cultural similarity or disparity.

In the light of the aforementioned versions of autonomy, one might assume that only some versions such as: Benson's psychological version, Oxford's socio-cultural version, Smith's weak pedagogy, Kumaravadivelu's academic autonomy and Holliday's social autonomy can fit to the Algerian educational context. Because, within the Algerian foreign language learning context, learners remarkably lack autonomy, independent action skills, and responsibility in their language learning. Therefore, when conducting learner autonomy research in the Algerian context, researchers or practitioners ought to consider first these realities, and thus need to opt for such versions that stress shared responsibility for decision making, strategy training and the creation of optimal conditions for autonomy, as only these approaches seem to be reasonable and most proper for the Algerian context.

4. Learner Autonomy and Teacher Autonomy

In the course of working on the worthwhile goal of learner autonomy in language education, teachers need not only to play the role of facilitators, counselors or monitors, but also to be effective decision makers, responsible leaders, and independent professionals at schools. Those skills, in effect, are focal conditions for academic autonomy. This implies that teachers are supposed to be, in some degree, autonomous. With this regard, Little (1995) argues "the promotion of learner autonomy depends (in fact) on the promotion of teacher autonomy" (p. 179), and adds that learner autonomy is more likely to be developed if teachers have themselves received an autonomous encouraging education (Little, 1995, p.180). Furthermore, Breen and Mann (1997) maintain that "an essential precondition for the teacher to be able to foster autonomous learning is an explicit awareness of the teacher's own self as a learner" (p.145). Hence, teachers ought to conceive themselves as learners not only of the teaching craft but also, of the foreign language they teach or even of their students' first language, Smith (2003).

The construct of teacher autonomy has initially been used, in the field of language education, by All wright (1988) and subsequently elaborated by Little (1995) who defines it as "teachers' capacity to engage in self-directed teaching." (p.176). It generally embodies learner autonomy tenets, in assuming responsibility, self-directedness, taking control, and freedom of choice. In this sense, Aoki (1999) suppose that if learner autonomy is: "the capacity, freedom, and/or responsibility to make choices concerning one's own learning . . . teacher autonomy, by analogy, can be defined as capacity, freedom to make choices concerning one's own teaching" (p.111).

Benson (2000) defines teacher autonomy as "a right to freedom from control (or an ability to exercise this right) as well as actual freedom from control" (p.111)**.** Smith (2000), on the other hand, explains it "as the ability to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes for oneself as a teacher, in cooperation with others" **(**p. 89).While, Thavenius (1999) describes the autonomous teacher as one "who reflects on her teacher role and who can change it, who can help her learners become autonomous, and who is independent enough to let her learners become independent" (p.160). As can be seen, the term teacher autonomy, akin to learner autonomy, has been described in several ways; as a capacity, a set of skills, and a right for freedom. To make it easier for users to employ the term, Smith (2001) has made an interesting list out of the various dimensions of teacher autonomy that are presented in the educational literature, in which he summarized six points in relation to two main categories, one associated with professional action and the other linked to professional development:

In relation to professional action:
A. Self-directed professional action
B. Capacity for self-directed professional action
C. Freedom from control over professional action
In relation to professional development:
D. Self-directed professional development
E. Capacity for self-directed professional development
F. Freedom from control over professional development

(Smith, 2001, p.5)

What can be drawn from the above distinction is that, the first set concerns the teacher's action solely, that is, the autonomy of the teacher is experienced while exercising the teaching activity regardless of the proceeding effect, therefore, it sees autonomy as a 'state'. Unlike the second set, that takes autonomy as an 'ongoing process' and emphasizes on the developmental dimension of the autonomous teacher. By inference, the two categories imply different degrees of autonomy, teacher autonomy in the first sense tend to bear a lower level of autonomy if compared to the second, because the act of developing an action entails higher autonomy and is more demanding than the act of doing the action itself. Besides, teachers who have the capacity and freedom to take control of their professional development are certainly well able to take self-directed professional action, but the other way around is not necessarily true.

From a relational perspective, La Ganza (2004) marks the notion of teacher autonomy in terms of four principal dynamic dimensions:

1. Teacher autonomy in relation to internal dialectics with peers and other mentors
2. Teacher autonomy in relation to learners
3. Teacher autonomy in relation to potential decision makers inside the institution
4. Teacher autonomy in relation to potential decision makers outside the institution

This view of teacher autonomy as an inter-relational construct suggests that the four dimensions "are interconnected socially and culturally, as part of the same society, and psychologically, through the common element of the teacher" (La Ganza, 2008, p.72). They all impinge on the

autonomy of the teacher; the social and psychological interactions with peer teachers, learners, internal and external decision makers can either support or hamper the teacher's freedom to be creative, to act on their thoughts, and to attain their targets. In fact, such model has not just profitably contributed to broaden our understanding of the term, but it has also, displayed important aspects embedded in teacher autonomy that can be pedagogically useful.

With this interdependent relational aspect in teacher autonomy, external control is unavoidably self-imposed. Because, the relating individuals (colleagues, administrative staff, learners, parents, legislation and policy makers) can directly or indirectly restrict the teacher's choice over the teaching content, instructions or evaluation. For example, teachers may be required to follow certain course sequence from a particular designated textbook. If such curriculum guidelines are strictly mandated, then teachers' freedom to amend or to make choices over the content, arrangement and assessment of teaching activities, is therefore very limited. Accordingly, curriculum policies in particular, and educational as well as political environments in general, can to a greater or a lesser extent influence the autonomy of the teacher.

External control can be undesirable for some teachers since it hampers their freedom to act independently, however such restriction on independent action is, at times, essential to avoid the misuse of teacher autonomy. Indeed, this has been stressed by Cohen (1981) on the significance of teacher evaluation by others so as to prevent the profession from being 'fossilized'. Because, teacher autonomy is a double edged sword, it can positively create life-long learners, effective decision makers, as it can potentially result in random detrimental teaching. Therefore, good control over teaching performance should be carefully maintained to ensure desired learning outcomes.

5. Learner Autonomy and Culture

Being aware of the significant impact of culture on autonomous language learning, many researchers (e.g. Riley 1988; Little & Dam, 1998 ; Benson et al, 2003; Holliday, 2003; Palfreyman , 2003 ; Oxford, 2003; Riley, 2003; Smith, 2003) drew careful attention to its implications within different cultural contexts. "if we accept that autonomy takes different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different context of learning, we may also need to accept that its manifestations will vary according to cultural context." Benson (2001, p. 55). Therefore, a need for investigating learner autonomy in different cultural settings is called for, so as to examine the adaptability of the concept within diverse cultures (Cotterall, 1995; 1999 ;Bullock, 2011) .

This concept of culture has actually been highlighted in various educational settings. Because learning occurs, in essence, within specific cultural contexts which inevitably shapes the form of learning, in a way that is compatible with the cultural norms and practices of a particular community. If learning is notably influenced by the learners' cultural background, potential questions, then, seem to emerge: is learner autonomy suitable as an educational goal for all cultural contexts? Is it appreciated in particular cultures and devalued in others? If possibly integrated in all educational settings, does it take equal implementation and promotion pace across worldwide cultures? Regarding such concerns and particularly issues of cultural appropriateness towards learner autonomy, there seems to exist two major views in the literature, one standpoint advocating

the generalization of learner autonomy in worldwide cultures, and another emphasizing the learners' cross-cultural particularity.

On the one hand, some researchers hold that learner autonomy is a concept that can feasibly be discussed, instigated and developed in every corner of the world. Little (1999b), for example, strongly assumes the universality of learner autonomy "learner autonomy is an appropriate pedagogical goal in all cultural settings" (Little, 1999b, p.15), because for him, it basically involves an individual's ability to take responsibility for one's own learning, which makes up part of any human being's overall capacities. Likewise, Benson (2001) and Sinclair (2000) are of the same mind in describing some commonly recognized features of autonomy, "Autonomy is about capacity therefore is a learner attribute rather than learning situation" (Benson, 2006a, p. 23). This, indeed, implies the applicability of the concept in any learning context no matter what cultural background it belongs to. Even though this view is sensitively relaxing; since it takes all learners as having equal possibilities to become autonomous, it appears to discount the effect of social and cultural factors on learning.

On the other hand, it has been pointed out that learner autonomy may not be appropriate, due to some cultural constraints, in some societies as it may well be fitting to other ethnic cultures (Benson 1997; Pennycook 1997; Sinclair 1997). This claim corresponds respectively to the 'non-Western cultures' versus 'Western cultures' opposition. Littlewood (1999) for example, holds that autonomy might be unsuitable for non-Western contexts, since most of autonomy reported definitions are typically connected to Western individualism. In addition to that, Western societies are often characterized as upholding a good sense of individualism, self-confidence, self-expression, personal independence and critical thinking, which are key characteristics of learner autonomy; therefore, they are most likely to be appealing to Western values.

However, "doubts about the cultural appropriateness of the goal of autonomy for Asian students have been mainly based on a view of Asian cultures as collectivist and accepting of relations of power and authority" (Benson, 2001, p. 56). Accordingly, power gaps between teachers and learners cause one of the main obstacles for developing autonomy in collectivist cultures. Because in Asian cultures, 'knowledge is power', therefore, people conveying knowledge (teachers) are ranked in a higher position than people who are less knowledgeable (learners). For that reason, respect for authority is fundamental and learners who tend to discuss, contradict or criticize their superiors'(teachers) knowledge, may appear to be disrespectful and impolite, this evidently indicates bad education in the society's eyes. Furthermore, the Asian 'culture of learning', as articulated by Palfreyman (2003), tends to cherish certain qualities such as, group work, memorization, imitation, theoretical knowledge and a receptive learning style, which actually mismatch the essential conditions for cultivating learner autonomy. As a result, it might be uneasy to manifest autonomy in such learning contexts. Nevertheless, despite such cultural constraints, Ho and Crookall (1995) have successfully shown the viability of promoting learner autonomy in an Asian context by engaging learners into a project that enabled them to develop certain autonomy-based capabilities, skills and attitudes.

In this respect, Littlewood (1999) interestingly puts forward two forms of autonomy: *proactive* and *reactive* autonomy. He describes the former as "the form of autonomy that is usually

intended when the concept is discussed in the West", while he presents the latter as the type of autonomy which "does not create its own directions" and which is most readily conveyed by Asian learners. In proactive autonomy, the learning objectives are   autonomously set by learners. That is, without external intervention, learners are able to make deliberate efforts and purposeful contribution in fixing their own learning goals. This form is assumed to be compatible with the Western tradition. While in reactive autonomy, learners organize their resources to achieve learning objectives that have already been set. Being as such, it is believed that reactive autonomy can correspond with the East Asian context. What is more, Littlewood (1999) proclaims reactive autonomy to be a preliminary stage for Asian learners that can mature to become proactive in the Western sense.

6. Learner Autonomy and the Algerian Cultural Context

As for the Algerian context, there seems to be a set of cultural traits that can be regarded as inhibiting in the road to autonomy. Sonaiya (2002), for instance, believes that the idea of autonomy is unsuitable to African settings. In fact, this is assumed mainly because we tend to find within African or Algerian learners, in particular, certain educational beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that are not very far from the aforesaid Asian style. Such beliefs and attitudes stem from notions like; collaboration, authority's control, indirectness and social status that are deeply rooted in the national cultural background.

For example, members of the Algerian society tend to follow parents and society conventions, Benaissi (2015). Because an Algerian student "progresses in a culture of the group, the family, the community; takes decisions with the parents (family); shares experience with others." Benaissi (2015,p.412). This sense of collective involvement in one's own life is, thus, reflected in students' approach to learning, in that, they readily accept teachers' full command in outlining their learning path, in determining the 'what', 'how 'and 'why' of their learning. As they show little capacity to take the initiative and suppose that their learning progression and outcome are in a large part their teachers' responsibility.

Indirect communication is another cultural feature that defines Algerian students' learning attitude. With a habitual tendency to communicate ideas and information around the point or in a vague manner, generally to save face and to maintain the honor of both interlocutors or to seem polite and respectful, Algerian learners tend to find difficulty in describing directly what seems relevant, beneficial or redundant to their learning in front of their educators. As a result, they may not be able to express with full clarity and precision their learning needs and expectations. This eventually may hamper student's freedom of self-expression and personal independence, and may implicitly discourage and reduce their capacity for autonomous learning.

Moreover, social status is important in the Algerian society and showing respect for members in a powerful position, is generally assumed; therefore, learners (being in a less powerful place than teachers who are masters of the class), often find it embarrassing to question the content of their learning or to discuss the knowledge conveyed by their superiors. Likewise, students' intellectual disagreement and detection of what is right or wrong is sometimes seen as challenge and effrontery. This has in some way resulted in a tendency towards a conservative approach to

learning, where many learners lack a level of rational skepticism and critical thinking, which are key components of learner autonomy.

Although the Algerian cultural tradition holds some constraints that can cause uneasiness and reluctance towards autonomous learning, it is certainly not impossible to adapt ways and strategies that can cope with conditions of this particular context as, Holliday (2003) maintains, autonomy resides in students' social worlds and learners from different cultures can be autonomous in their own way. Therefore, with the great variation in cultures, autonomy in learning can still be achievable since its core components seem to be universally inherent and shared.

Conclusion

This paper addresses various conceptions provided by pioneers in the field of learner autonomy. It attempts to illuminate important notions that are closely related to the concept as it makes connection to the Algerian context so as to offer insightful hints for researchers who might be interested in carrying out autonomy- related works in this setting. Admittedly, it cannot be claimed that this article is comprehensive and inclusive of all the crucial facets of autonomy, however it tends to summarize basic definitions, versions and principles of autonomy and eventually, it might serve as a supplement to the theoretical part in the literature.

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