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EFFECTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNER AUTONOMY IN THE MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL ESOL CLASSROOM.

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Dissertation

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To the ones who leave behind their homelands, family and friends

in search of a better future.

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Abstract

There seems to be a general agreement as regards the importance of educators to work towards the promotion of learning autonomy in all its dimensions as an integral component of language teaching practices. As the learners' ability to behave autonomously and take control over their learning process is dependent upon the teacher creating a classroom culture where autonomy is accepted, teacher's awareness and training are essential. Specifically, to implement different strategies and techniques aimed at fostering learner autonomy in the multilingual and multicultural ESOL classroom requires teacher's preparation to work with culturally and linguistic diverse learners. Based on the latest findings in the specialized literature, the overall research aim of this study is to inquire to what extent ESOL teachers implement effective strategies and techniques that promote the development of learner autonomy in the multilingual and multicultural ESOL classroom. To this aim, a group of ESOL teachers and their students at two Multicultural Centers in the Province of Ontario, Canada, were selected as the study population. The data collection methods used were: a) self-completion questionnaires for the teachers, b) direct classroom observations, and c) informal and semi-structured interviewing with the teachers. The findings indicate that ESOL teachers in Multicultural Centers in Ontario, Canada, partially implement teaching strategies and techniques that effectively develop learner's autonomy. The extent to which autonomy was fostered effectively was mainly dependent on the philosophy of the institution, the cultural context in which learning took place, the cultural background of the learner, the degree of autonomy of the learners and the role of the teacher within the individual classroom.

Key Words: learner autonomy   multicultural   multilingual   ESOL

Resumen

Parece haber un acuerdo general con respecto a la importancia que los educadores le otorgan a la promoción de la autonomía en el aprendizaje en todas sus dimensiones como un componente de las prácticas de la enseñanza del lenguaje. Debido a que la habilidad de los estudiantes para comportarse en forma autónoma depende de la creación por parte del docente de una cultura en la clase en donde la autonomía es aceptada, el conocimiento y el entrenamiento del docente son esenciales. Específicamente, implementar técnicas y estrategias diferentes que apunten a fomentar la autonomía del estudiante en la clase de Inglés como Segunda Lengua (ISL), multicultural y multilingüe requiere preparación del docente para trabajar con estudiantes de una gran diversidad cultural y lingüística. A partir de los aportes más recientes de la bibliografía especializada, el objetivo general de este estudio es determinar en qué medida los docentes de ISL implementan técnicas y estrategias eficaces para promover el desarrollo de la autonomía del estudiante en la clase ISL, multicultural y multilingüe. Para este propósito, un grupo de docentes de ISL y sus estudiantes que asisten a dos centros multiculturales de la provincia de Ontario, Canadá, fueron seleccionados como población de estudio. Los métodos de recolección de datos usados fueron: a) cuestionarios a completar por los docentes, b) observaciones directas de clases, y c) entrevistas informales y formales con los docentes. Los resultados de la investigación indican que los docentes ISL de los centros multiculturales de Ontario, Canadá, parcialmente implementan técnicas y estrategias que desarrollan con eficacia la autonomía de los estudiantes. El grado de autonomía alcanzada con eficacia está sujeta principalmente a la filosofía de la institución, el contexto cultural en el cual el aprendizaje tiene lugar, el nivel de autonomía de los estudiantes y el rol del docente dentro de la clase individual. .

Palabras claves: autonomía del estudiante multicultural multilingüe ISL

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1.   INTRODUCTION

During the last decades, there has been a strong emphasis on promoting a more learner centered classroom in which the individual becomes an active participant in planning, pacing, monitoring and assessing his or her own learning process. Since the students are no longer seen as empty containers waiting to be filled with the teacher's knowledge, the theoretical and pedagogical framework highlights the importance of developing learner autonomy as essential to the learning process.

Holec (1981) defines learner autonomy as the "ability of learners to take control over their learning process" (p.3) and explains that promoting learner autonomy refers to encouraging students "to determine the objectives, to define the contents and progressions, to select methods and techniques to be used, to monitor the procedures of acquisition and to evaluate what have been acquired" (p.3). Developing valuable student strategies that foster autonomous learning requires considerable training and preparation on the part of the teachers: There is an important role for teachers in this process since the ability to behave autonomously for students is dependent upon the teacher creating a classroom culture where autonomy is accepted (Barfield et al., 2001, as cited by Balcikanli, 2010).

The typical ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) multilingual and multicultural classroom can be found in English speaking countries and the students are either foreign students or immigrants. Some of the problems inherent in this type of classroom arise from the fact that learners come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As a result, they will experience very dissimilar cultural values, traditions, customs and learning styles. Teacher's preparation to work with culturally and linguistic diverse learners is essential to implement different strategies and techniques aimed at fostering and enhancing learner autonomy.

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The overall research aim of this study is to advance an understanding of the strategies and techniques that ESOL teachers implement to promote the development of learner autonomy in the multilingual and multicultural ESOL classroom. Specifically, the study focuses on teaching conducted in Multicultural Centers in the province of Ontario, Canada. The research attempts to explore and identify the ESOL teaching strategies and techniques, evaluate and analyze them critically and determine if those teaching strategies and techniques are effective to promote learner autonomy in the multilingual and multicultural ESOL classroom.

Research question

Do ESOL teachers in Multicultural Centers in the province of Ontario, Canada, implement teaching strategies and techniques that effectively develop learner's autonomy?

Basic hypothesis

ESOL teachers in Multicultural Centers in the province of Ontario, Canada, partially implement teaching strategies and techniques that effectively develop learner's autonomy.

As derived from the research question, the following hypotheses will also be examined:

-ESOL teachers in the multilingual and multicultural classroom are often unable to implement effective strategies and techniques to promote learner's autonomy.

-ESOL teachers find it difficult to implement effective teaching strategies and techniques to promote learner's autonomy in the multilingual and multicultural classroom.

-ESOL teachers are not fully aware of effective teaching strategies and techniques that can be implemented in the multilingual and multicultural classroom to promote learner's autonomy.

Operational definitions

Teaching strategies and techniques

It refers to the variety of skills and the different ways of teaching implemented by the teacher with the purpose of achieving the learning objectives and enhancing the learning process of the learners.

Multilingual classroom

A multilingual class is a class in which learners speak a variety of first languages.

Multicultural classroom

A multicultural class is a class in which learners come from a variety of communities.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Towards a definition of learner autonomy

In order to understand the meaning of the term learner autonomy, it is important to trace back its historical roots. In the last years, a substantial body of research has been carried out in relation to the role of the learner in the classroom. The idea of implementing a more learner-centered approach to teaching has its origin in the 1950s and 1960s due to a broad development in the field of psychology away from behaviourism. Kelly (1955), a psychologist whose ideas strongly influenced education, portrayed the learner as an active individual with unique previous experiences, beliefs and preferences. "It is not the events and the texts themselves that are ingrained in his memory but the object of his attention. How he has apprehended the matter and what he has done with it" (p35). Central to Kelly's (1955) position is the idea of the individual as a meaning maker. Rather than seeing the learner as a passive container to be filled with the teacher's ideas, this approach considers the learner as someone who actively shapes his or her learning experiences with the purpose of self-development and fulfillment (Stevick 1980, Atkinson 1993, as cited in Reinders, 2010).

Another psychologist who has proved to exert a strong influence on education is Carl Rogers (1969) who, in his theory of learning, regarded the learner as the one who learns and not the teacher who teaches. Rogers (1969) has come to "feel that the only learning which significantly influences behaviour is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning (…) and such self-discovered learning, truth that has been personally appropriated and assimilated in experience, cannot be directly communicated to another". In this statement, Rogers (1969) makes it clear that for meaningful learning to take place the subject matter has to be perceived by the student as having relevance for his own purposes in the way that it makes a

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difference in the behaviour, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner. Rogers (1969) explains that learning is always self-initiated since even "when the impetus or stimulus comes from the outside, the sense of discovery, of reaching out, of grasping and comprehending, comes from within". Learning is evaluated by the learner because it is the learner who knows "whether it is meeting his need, whether it leads toward what he wants to know, whether it illuminates the dark area of ignorance he is experiencing" (Rogers, 1969). Last but not least, Roger's (1969) theory of learning reveals the role of the teacher as a facilitator by stating that the primary task of the teacher is to permit the student to learn, to feed his or her own curiosity.

According to Reinders (2010), constructivism also contributed to give the learner a more central role by focusing less on the knowledge to be transmitted and more on the idea that new knowledge is internalized by the individuals through processes of constructing, reorganizing and sharing that knowledge. In order for this process to be successful, it is essential for the learner to be aware of their own learning process and how to manage it (Reinders, 2010). Amongst one the most influential personalities who have added new perspectives to constructivist learning theory and practice is Lev Vygotsky (1978). In his Social Development Theory, Vygotsky (1978) emphasised the importance of the social aspect of learning and explained that the potential for cognitive development depends upon the zone of proximal development (ZPD): a level of development attained when children engage in social behaviour. Full development of the ZPD depends upon full social interaction. The range of skill that can be developed with adult guidance or peer collaboration exceeds what can be attained alone.

Considering the political side of autonomy in education, Reinders (2011) suggests that ideas about the right to freedom of choice emerged in the 20th century after World War II when a

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great number of minority rights movements began voicing their beliefs and clearly regarded education as an empowering tool that would instil in people an awareness of these issues. As Jane (1977, as cited by Holec 1981, as cited by Reinders 2011) contends:

> Adult education should become an instrument for arousing an increasing sense of awareness and liberation in man, and, in some cases, an instrument for changing the environment itself. From the idea of man 'product of his society', one moves to the idea of man as 'producer of his society'. (p.3)

From this point of view, the individual is portrayed as a responsible and active participant in shaping his or her own life. Education has to prepare learners for this role, which involves teaching them life-long skills necessary to take control over the processes and content of learning (Reinders, 2011).

All these streams of thought have certainly influenced language teaching and learning and have had a considerable influence on the concept of learner autonomy which lacked a theoretical framework until the 1970s. However, it was clear that the learner occupied a more central place in the language classroom. It was in the context of foreign language teaching that Holec (1981) developed the pedagogical concept of learner autonomy as an educational construct and used it to refer to the "ability of learners to take control over their learning process". This ability refers to "a potential capacity to act in a given situation -in our case learning- and not the actual behaviour of an individual in that situation" (Holec, 1981). Holec's (1981) definition triggered an immediate response in the educational community since, for many, the term *learner autonomy* was subject to be interpreted from various perspectives. Pemberton (1996, as cited in Chui, 2005) argues that the problem of defining learner autonomy arises from the fact that the term not only encompasses different

things but also there are other terms used to refer to the same thing: self directed learning and independent learning.

In an effort to clarify the diverse and ambiguous interpretations of learner autonomy, Little (1991) explains that the misconception of autonomy in language learning might be due to the fact that the term self-instruction is commonly used as a synonym for learner autonomy. From Little's (1991) point of view, autonomy differs from self-instruction in that the latter is limited to learning without a teacher. If self-instruction can sometimes help learners to achieve a certain degree of autonomy, not every learner who learns without a teacher becomes autonomous (Little, 1991).

For Little (1991), "Autonomy is a capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (p.4). In his definition of autonomy, as suggested by Chui (2005), Little (1991) is taking into consideration a social interactive perspective of autonomy in language learning by adopting notions from Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development in which new levels of autonomy must grow out of dependence under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. Therefore, interdependence, always balanced between independence and dependence, is the essential condition of humans as social beings (Little, 1991, as cited in Chui, 2005). In other words, Little (2015) asserts that the practice of learner autonomy requires insight, a positive attitude, a capacity for reflection, and a readiness to be proactive in self-management and in interaction with others: a holistic view of the learner that requires to engage with the cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social dimensions of language learning.

Another point Little (1991) addresses when defining autonomy is the fact that autonomy can also be misinterpreted as an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher, especially with reference to the classroom context. This abdication of teacher responsibility in

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language classroom can lead to an organizational fallacy that encourages teachers to relinquish all their initiative and control (Little, 1991). Finally, Little (1991) makes it clear that autonomy is not a new teaching method nor a new approach to enforce a particular way of learning but it should be seen as an educational goal (Aoki & Smith, 1999, as cited in Little, 1991).

Benson & Voller (1997, as cited in Nunan, 2003) endorse Holec's (1981) definition of autonomy. However, they believe that the difficulty in defining learner autonomy lies in the fact that in language education the term is used in at least five different ways:

1. for situations in which learners study entirely on their own

2. for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning

3. for an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education

4. for the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning

5. for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning

(Benson &Voller, 1997, as cited in Nunan, 2003)

Benson's (2001) defines autonomy as "the capacity to take control of one's own learning, largely because the construct of 'control' appears to be more open to investigation than the constructs of 'charge' or 'responsibility'. For Benson (2001), autonomy is "a capacity that learners possess to various degrees". In another publication Benson (2003) argues that autonomy is perhaps best described as a capacity because various kinds of abilities can be involved in control over learning. Researchers generally agree that the most important abilities are those that allow learners to plan their own learning activities, monitor their progress and evaluate their outcomes (Benson, 2003).

Pondering over Benson's (2001) definition of autonomy, Reinders (2010) believes that many learners are unlikely to take control over, for instance, decisions about what to learn and how, which makes the implementation of pedagogy for developing learner autonomy difficult. Reinders (2010) also highlights a political element that might interfere with the development of learner autonomy since, at a practical level, many groups are unable to take control or make choices about their learning. "State-led education policies, school curricula and the prescribed use of textbooks are all examples of ways in which the development of autonomy may be hindered" (Reinders, 2010).

Scharle and Szabó (2000) claim: "In theory, we may define autonomy as the freedom and ability to manage one's own affairs, which entails the right to make decisions as well. Responsibility may also be understood as being in charge of something, but with the implication that one has to deal with the consequences of one's own actions. Autonomy and responsibility both require active involvement, and they are apparently very much interrelated" (p.4). Scharle and Szabó (2000) support the idea that, in order to foster autonomy, the role of the teacher is key to develop a sense of responsibility and also to encourage learners to take an active part in making decisions about their learning. For learners to be actively involved in the learning process, they first need to realise and accept that success in learning depends as much on the students as on the teacher (Scharle and Szabó, 2000).

Sinclair (1997, 2000, as cited by Chui, 2005) considers it important to establish a broad and realistic description of the concept of learner autonomy and identifies thirteen aspects of autonomy that accommodate the different dimensions of autonomy recognized in the domain of language teaching and learning:

1. Autonomy is a construct of capacity;

2. Autonomy involves a willingness on the part of the learner to take responsibility for their own learning;

3. The capacity and willingness of learners to take such responsibility is not necessarily innate;

4. Complete autonomy is an idealistic goal;

5. There are degrees of autonomy;

6. The degrees of autonomy are unstable and variable;

7. Autonomy is not simply a matter of placing learners in situations where they have to be independent;

8. Developing autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process, i.e., conscious reflection and decision making;

9. Promoting autonomy is not simply a matter of teaching strategies;

10. Autonomy can take place both inside and outside the classroom;

11. Autonomy has a social as well as an individual dimension;

12. The promotion of learner autonomy has a political as well as psychological dimension;

13. Autonomy is interpreted differently by different cultures.

The review of the literature reveals that in spite of the fact that there is no general consensus on one definition of learner autonomy that comprises all the aspects involved in autonomous learning, there seems to be a general agreement as regards the importance of educators to work towards the promotion of learning autonomy in all its dimensions as an integral component of language teaching practices.

2.2 Teaching strategies and techniques to develop learner autonomy

When analysing the practical implications of fostering autonomy Numan (1996) argues that there are degrees of autonomy, and the extent to which it is feasible or desirable for learners to embrace autonomy will depend on the range of factors to do with the personality of the learner, their goals in undertaking the study of another language, the philosophy of the institutions, and the cultural context in which the learning takes place. Nunan (1996) also explains that by systematically incorporating strategy training into the learning process, some degree of autonomy can be fostered in learners regardless of the extent to which they are naturally exposed.

Nunan (2003) also suggests that, unfortunately, not all learners come into the classroom or any other educational environment equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow them to take control of their own learning process and recommends teachers who are committed to concepts of learner-centredness and autonomy to take steps towards helping their learners to develop this knowledge and skills together with raising awareness.

2.2.1 The role of the teacher

Scharle and Szabó (2000) clearly indicate that to develop responsible attitudes in the learner as they start to take charge of their learning process the teacher needs to assume the role of facilitator or counsellor. As follows, Rogers (1983, as cited by Weibell, 2011), in his theory of learning, best details the teacher in this role:

- The facilitator is usually the person in charge of creating the initial mood or climate of the group or class experience.

- The facilitator helps to elicit and clarify the objectives of the individuals in the class as well as the more general objectives of the group.

- The facilitator relies upon the desire of each student to implement those purposes which have meaning for him, as the motivational force behind significant learning.

- The facilitator is not only a flexible resource to be utilized by the group but he or she is the one who organizes and makes it easily available the widest possible range of resources for learning.

- The facilitator discusses both the intellectual content and the emotionalized attitudes of the individuals or group.

- The facilitator is participant learner, a member of the group, expressing his views as those of one individual only.

- The facilitator takes the initiative in sharing his or her feeling and thoughts with the group in ways which do not demand nor impose but represent simply a personal sharing which students may take or leave.

- The facilitator recognizes and accepts his or her own limitations.

All the items listed above require of a certain element that would lead the learner into the autonomous path: metacognition. Flavell (1970, as cited in Reinders, 2011) defines metacognition as our awareness of the cognitive process that occurs during learning. According to Hacker, Dunlosky and Graesser (1998, as cited in Reinders, 2011), metacognitive awareness involves thinking about what one knows (metacognitive knowledge), thinking of what one is currently doing (metacognitive skill) and thinking of what one's current cognitive or affective state (metacognitive experience). "If it is the aim of the education to let learners take charge of their own learning, then they need to be able to

plan, monitor and evaluate their learning. And in order to do so, they need to be metacognitive aware" (Reinders, 2011).

As the starting point in the process of becoming autonomous learners, Scharle and Szabó (2000) highlight the importance of the role of the teacher in raising awareness by introducing new viewpoints and new experiences to the learners and encouraging them to bring the inner processes of the learning to the conscious level of their thinking.

The role of the teacher for autonomous learners is to help them to assume the responsibility for making decisions of their learning in 1) determining the objectives, 2) defining the contents and progressions, 3) selecting methods and techniques to be used, 4) monitoring the procedure of acquisition, and 5) evaluating what has been acquired (Holec, 1981, as cited in Chui, 2005).

Finally, as Ramirez Espinosa (2012) suggests, the teachers and the students need a constant reminder that a course based on the development of autonomy implies a change as regards their traditional roles. Much in the same way as the students need to remember that being autonomous will surely help them surpass personal, institutional, or cultural constraints that might arise during the learning process, the teachers need to remember what their new role demands allowing students to make decisions about classroom issues (Ramirez Espinosa, 2012).

2.2.2 Planning for the autonomous classroom

Maftoon & Sarem (2012) suggest that in recent decades, following the shift of focus from the previous teacher-centered approaches and the emergence of social constructivist theories, learner autonomy has come to be considered as an important goal in the process of second

language teaching and learning. For Maftoon & Sarem (2012), the new trends of research in psychology, sociology and linguistics, opened up new insights on language teaching, learning and the role of learners in the language learning process. As a result, syllabi design, in every specific point at time, reflected those underlying premises of each teaching methodology and teachers began to attach more importance to learners' cognition, personality, motivation as well as the processes involved in language learning (Maftoon & Sarem, 2012).

As learner autonomy gained popularity, it became necessary to focus the attention on how teaching practices, language course materials and curriculum development were adjusting to the new trends. As Benson (2001) clearly states, a course that caters for a variety of competence levels, needs and interests and whose main aim is to foster learner autonomy has to provide for the skills that students need in order to take control of their own learning process.

Nunan (1995, as cited in Reinders 2010) defines the learner centred curriculum as one where "key decisions about what will be taught, how it will be taught, when it will be taught, and how it will be assessed will be made with reference to the learner". As an aid to promote learner autonomy, Nunan (2003) presents a theoretical rationale for a curriculum grounded in notions of learner-centredness and learner autonomy and suggests the incorporation of a series of steps into the educational process: For moving learners along the continuum from dependence to autonomy, the following steps can be introduced gradually and simultaneously into the teaching practices:

• Step 1: Make instruction goals clear to learners

• Step 2: Allow learners to create their own goals

• Step 3: Encourage learners to use their second language outside the classroom

• Step 4: Raise awareness of learning processes

• Step 5: Help learners identify their own preferred styles and strategies

• Step 6: Encourage learner choice

• Step 7: Allow learners to generate their own tasks

• Step 8: Encourage learners to become teachers

• Step 9: Encourage learners to become researchers (Nunan, 2003)

Espinosa (2015) supports the idea that, as much as it is desired, autonomy should not be incorporated into an ongoing language course whenever teachers want, neither should it be attached to old course designs. As Cotterall (1995) states, autonomy cannot simply be "clipped on to existing learning programmes" but needs to be conceived as the core around which a new course will be designed. Holec (1981) believes the challenge facing course designers who wish to foster learners' ability to 'take charge of their learning' is to find ways of supporting the transfer of responsibility for decision-making about learning from teacher to learner. Cotterall (1995) states that even though many programmes, and most ESOL teachers, claim to believe in autonomy, many of the same teachers regularly exclude learners from decisions about planning, pacing, and evaluating classroom tasks. That is the reason why Cotterall (2000) suggests that language courses which aim to foster learner autonomy should adopt means of transferring responsibility for aspects of the language learning process (such as setting goals, selecting learning strategies, and evaluating progress) from the teacher to the learner. For that purpose, Cotterall (2000) proposes to follow five general principles of language course design:

1. Learner goals,

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2. The language learning process,

3. Tasks,

4. Learner strategies, and

5. Reflection on learning.

According to Cotterall (2000), the first principle refers to the importance for setting *learner goals* which the learners deem important. Breen and Candlin (1980, as cited in Maftoon & Sarem, 2012) comment that, however vague a learner's initial interpretation of the demands of the target repertoire and its underlying competence may be, he is not going to learn anything unless he has an idea of what he is trying to achieve. Therefore, in a course which seeks to foster language learners' autonomy, time is devoted to raising learners' awareness of ways of identifying goals, specifying objectives, identifying resources and strategies needed to achieve goals, and measuring progress (Cotterall, 2000).

The second principle, as regards *the language learning process*, refers to raising students' awareness about how languages function and how languages are learned as essential components for anyone who pursues autonomy (Cotterall, 2000). Learners can only be autonomous if they are aware of a range of learning options, and understand the consequences of choices they make. Armed with a model of language learning, learners are able to question the role of input texts and tasks, to trial alternative strategies, and to seek feedback on their performance (Cotterall, 2000).

As regards *tasks,* Cotterall (2000) emphasises the fact that course tasks should either replicate real-world communicative tasks or provide rehearsal for such tasks. To facilitate task performance, discussions and practice related to the different strategies to be used should be encouraged as well as (Cotterall, 2000).

The fifth principle, according to Cotterall (2000), activities or tasks that promote *reflection on learning* enhance learners' insight into their learning processes and the potential for learner autonomy increases as an individual's learning awareness grows. In a recent report, Dam and Legenhausen (1999, as cited by Cotterall, 2000) claim that learners' ability to reflect critically on their learning is a measure of the effectiveness of the learning environment. Dam and Legenhausen (1999, as cited by Cotterall, 2000) use the term 'evaluation' to refer to the metacognitive activity of reviewing past and future learning experiences in order to enhance learning, and claim that:

> In an autonomous classroom . . . [evaluation] is viewed as the
>
> pivot of a good learning/teaching cycle . . . Evaluation has a
>
> retrospective and prospective function, in which the learning
>
> experiences of the past are reflected upon and transformed into
>
> plans for future action. (p.112)

Despite the vast array of research on how to foster autonomy in the language classroom, Ramirez Espinosa (2012) finds it difficult to find step-by-step processes to design syllabi and curricula focused on the development of learner autonomy so he devoted to writing a practical guide to articulate the stages of design, implementation, and evaluation of an autonomy-fostering syllabus. Using Cotteral's (1995, 2000) principles as the starting point, Ramirez Espinosa expands on those concepts to provide educators with a flexible model for designing syllabi based on the promotion and development of learner autonomy. Ramirez Espinosa's guide (2015) proposes three main stages that can be adapted by adding or eliminating steps at the students' and teachers' convenience and according to their social and cultural background:

Stage 1: Setting the Mood for Autonomy

Step 1. *Diagnose your institution in terms of the opportunities that it offers (or might offer) for the development of autonomy.* The institution should provide students with appropriate resources and spaces for them to facilitate autonomous behaviors. Having spaces for the promotion of learning autonomy can be a matter of repurposing existing ones or creating others outside the institution. Libraries and computers with internet access can serve as resources towards autonomy.

Step 2. *Establish the initial autonomy profile of the students.* At the beginning of the course, it is necessary to assess who our students are in terms of their various degrees of autonomous behaviors. Since students' cultural background usually determines their conceptions as regards students' and teachers' roles, you should survey your students in order to determine their level of autonomy and you could also inquire into their learning strategies, study habits, and autonomous behaviors in previous learning experiences.

Step 3. *Equip your students with some learner-training workshops before starting the course.* Learner-training workshops, in support of developing autonomy, focus on: helping students understand how languages are learned; making students' familiar with successful language learner practices; and explaining the reasons why autonomy is desirable in language learning. Basically, these sessions are intended to raise awareness concerning autonomous learning.

Step 4. *Design self-access materials for the self-access center and introduce your students to both of them.* Students will only make use of self-access centres if they know about them and if they are familiar with the tasks, resources and materials offered. Besides, these tasks and materials need to have clear linguistic objectives to be fulfilled.

Stage 2: Design and Implementation

Step 5. *Lead a needs-analysis with your group*. This needs-analysis constitutes the foundations for learners to set their own goals, and it creates a good habit that will eventually result in autonomous behaviors.

Step 6. *Design a blueprint of your course syllabus in terms of contents, sequence, and evaluation*. However, in an autonomous classroom the course syllabus design will be the product of negotiation between the teacher and the students. By allowing our students to have a say in the design of the objectives, the contents, and the evaluation of any activity, learners will be aware of what they are expected to be: the managers of their learning process.

Step 7. *Have students select the goals of the course and let them have a say in the contents and the evaluation proposed in your syllabus blueprint*. Negotiation of the syllabus begins with a discussion on the needs analysis followed by a discussion about what the general and specific goals of the course will be. It is important to help learners set attainable goals according to the level of the course and explain to them that some goals might be shared by all participants, whereas other goals might remain personal. As far as the contents of the course are concerned, as a facilitator, should propose a sequence of contents and let the students decide to what extent they need to amplify it.

Step 8. *Implement the course through a TBL (Task-Based Learning) approach*. TBL has proved to be a great ally of autonomous classrooms because, in order to fulfill a task, students need to make autonomous decisions in two different ways: First, they need to put together their previous and new knowledge in order to solve the linguistic challenge, and second, they need to be independent users of the language. Besides, many tasks require interacting with others, which implies the development of certain social skills that result in motivation and a sense of purpose for using the language independently.

Step 9. *Allow students to propose their own materials and activities in the classroom.* Once learners are familiar with the type of tasks and materials inside and outside the classroom, they can begin suggesting their own materials and activities for the class. Teachers must make room in their syllabus for this kind of conducts to be manifested by encouraging genuine initial manifestations of autonomous behaviours.

Step 10. *Provide feedback constantly and promote peer-evaluation in every class.* Providing constant feedback promotes learner/teacher dialogue reflection on language learning. Thus, it constitutes a mechanism to keep track of the progress and to assess the learning process in terms of strengths and weaknesses, and at the same time, contributes to the continuous learner-training.

Step 11. *Encourage your students to keep a journal.* Diaries are intended to be an intimate and personal register that will enhance learner's self-monitoring and decision-making based on the information he/she collects. A teacher-researcher should only ask students to share their diaries provided that the initial instruction was to write experiences for themselves, not for the teacher to read. Thus, the diary will be understood as a personal element of reflection and not as a class assignment that the teacher collects periodically.

Stage 3: Evaluation of the Experience

Step 12. *Establish the closing autonomy profile of the students.* At the end of a course, it is necessary to run a survey in order to establish the new autonomous profile of the learners. Watching the before-and-after picture and acknowledging the achievements will raise a sense of motivation in the student.

Step 13. *Evaluate the syllabus structure with your students.* After a whole course, based on the development of autonomy and constant communication between the learners and the

teacher, have your students assess the syllabus structure in terms of the initial goals they set, the contents they helped to construct, and the procedures with which those contents were evaluated versus the outcomes they obtained.

As discussed in the literature, a variety of suggestions on how to approach the different planning stages for the autonomous classroom have been put forward by different scholars. Maftoon & Sarem (2012) highlight the benefits of using principle-based approaches to language teaching since developments in theory and research can be easily accommodated by altering, expanding, removing or adding a principle without having to discard all the other principles. In this way, the knowledge of language teaching can grow without being subject to the blanket acceptance or rejection that is typical of methods (Maftoon & Sarem, 2012). Maftoon & Sarem (2012) also suggest that the application of course design principles to the teaching practices can be beneficial to all educators who aimed at enhancing the learners' autonomy.

2.2.3 Developing a sense of responsibility

In the view of Scharle and Szabó (2000) responsible learners are the ones who: accept the idea that their own efforts are crucial to progress in learning and behave accordingly; consciously monitor their own progress; and make an effort to use available opportunities to their benefit. Taking into consideration that learning can only happen if learners are willing to contribute to the process, Scharle and Szabó (2000) consider that teachers should seek the development of responsibility and autonomy. Yagcioglu (2015) also believes that learner autonomy and learner responsibility are the fundamental topics in foreign language education since the learners who are not aware of their responsibilities can never be

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successful in learning new things. Thus, Yagcioglu (2015) enhances the significance of motivation by stating that learner autonomy, learner responsibility and motivation are always interrelated as no one can learn new things if they are not enough motivated. According to Dörnyei (2001), the relevance of autonomy to motivation in psychology has been best highlighted by the influential *self-determination theory* which argues that the freedom to choose and to have choices, rather than being forced or coerced to behave according to someone's else's desire, is a prerequisite to motivation. To help learners realise the importance of their contribution, Scharle and Szabó (2000) have identified different factors that might contribute to the development of the building blocks of responsibility and autonomy:

a)   *Motivation*: Motivation is a prerequisite for learning and responsibility development alike. On the one hand, intrinsically motivated learners are more able to identify with the goals of learning and that makes them more willing to take responsibility of their outcome. On the other hand, extrinsically motivated learners may increase dependence of the learners.

b)   *Self-confidence*: The learners must believe that they are capable of managing their own learning and that they can rely on themselves, not only the teacher. By developing a feeling of responsibility and independence, a sense of confidence is also being developed.

c)   *Monitoring:* When students are encouraged to focus on the process of learning rather than on the outcome, they are consciously examining their own contribution to their learning. Being aware of the fact that their efforts can make a difference constitutes an essential first step to the development of a responsible attitude.

d)   *Evaluation*: Self-evaluation requires the learners to assume the role of the teacher and objectively judge their own work. By creating opportunities for the learners to evaluate themselves, they can discover areas of strengths and weaknesses and plan the directions of

progress. If students are encouraged to set their own targets, they are more likely to consider these targets their own and feel responsible for reaching them.

e)   *Learning strategies*: Learning strategies are the tools that learners can use to improve their different language competences. Teachers need to show students the variety of available strategies, help them to find out what works for them, and help them discover how and when to use these strategies.

f)   *Cooperation and group cohesion:* Promoting cooperation in the classroom has an impact on learner attitudes in several ways. First, it encourages the learners to rely on each other rather than on the teacher. Secondly, group work also creates opportunities for feedback from peers. Finally, pair and group work may help teachers to get a higher proportion of students actively involved in completing a task.

g)   *Sharing information with the learner:* By sharing clear short and long term objectives with the students, teachers give students the opportunity to feel identified with the aims. As a result, the learners feel more responsible for the outcome.

h)   *Delegating tasks and decisions*: If learners are to take responsibility for their learning, they need to have some influence on the learning process. This implies that some tasks and decisions made during the classroom can be made by the learners. When students make decisions, they feel empowered that they have control or ownership over their own learning. It is important to make it clear that students are not trained teachers and cannot take over any teacher role, but they can be encouraged to take the teacher's role, for example, in choosing learning materials or providing peer feedback.

The truth of the matter is that, even though language teachers can provide all the necessary circumstances and input, if learners remain passive, learning will not happen (Scharle and Szabó, 2000). In accordance with the saying 'you can bring the horse to water, but you

cannot make him drink,' students' passive presence will not suffice, just as the horse would remain thirsty if he stood still by the river waiting patiently for his thirst to go away (Scharle and Szabó, 2000). Teachers and learners share responsibility for the outcome: Learners need to realise and accept the idea that success in learning depends as much on the student as on the teacher having a responsible attitude (Scharle and Szabó, 2000).

2.2.4 Monitoring learning and self-assessment

Holec's (1981) view of learner autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's learning' denotes a clear necessity for the learner to be an active participant throughout the learning process. Hence, one of the aspects that requires attention is the assessment procedure adopted in the classroom targeted at fostering autonomy in learning.

In the publication *Senior 1 to Senior 4 Spanish Language and Culture* (2004), assessment is defined as a systematic process of gathering information about what a student knows, is able to do, and is learning to do. The same publication also states that assessment information provides the foundation for decision-making and planning for instruction and learning. Depending on the type of information that it is intended to be gathered based on the learning needs, teachers make use of a variety of assessment techniques. For instance, *The Glossary of Education* explains that 'summative assessments' are used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period, typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, course, or school year. Summative assessments are usually contrasted with 'formative assessments', which collect detailed information that educators can use to improve instruction and student learning while it is happening.

Gardner (1999) asserts that self-assessment, as a formative type of assessment, is an important tool in the toolkit of autonomous language learners since it can be used both as a testing device leading to accreditation and as a device for personal self-monitoring. According to Gardner (1999), self-assessment does not only provide the learner with immediate feedback on achievements to determine language proficiency and to reflect on learning strategies but it also helps to build student confidence by demonstrating learning gain. Although Gardner (1999) emphasises the fact that there are great benefits to be derived from self-assessment, he also believes it is a technique that needs to be introduced carefully and accompanied by considerable awareness raising and support.

Kilner and Drew (2012) define self-assessment as a process in which learners make judgments about their own performance and abilities. Through a variety of activities, learners can gather information about their own learning, reflect on this information, and make decisions about their language learning goals (Kilner and Drew, 2012). For Kilner and Drew (2012), self-assessment can come at any time in a lesson - before, during or after a task. A self-assessment activity can be an extension of a formative assessment activity, providing both the instructor and the learner with information about the learning process, or it can be more independent, for the learner's benefit only (Kilner & Drew, 2012). In either situation, self-assessment can serve as: a measure or description of language proficiency and accomplishments; an awareness-raising activity (of culture, learning strategies, language learning needs, linguistic strengths and weaknesses); a foundation for setting goals; or a record of classroom and real-world activities and achievements (Kilner and Drew, 2012).

As far as some of the benefits of incorporating self-assessment in the teaching-learning process, Kilner & Drew (2012) list the following: the potential increase in self-awareness and self-confidence among learners; the potential for learners to take more control over their

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learning, reducing their dependence on the instructor and directing their learning towards specific goals; the development of each learner's ability to judge the appropriateness and accuracy of their performance using a set of criteria.

Kilner and Drew (2012) also draw the attention to the fact that, due to cultural or educational backgrounds and expectations, some learners and instructors will be unfamiliar with the concept of self-assessment in the language classroom and that those learners who normally expect correction, approval or a grade from the instructor may be surprised when their instructor asks them to self-correct and self-evaluate.

The following chart comprises a short list of different types of tools that can be used when implementing self-assessment in the classroom:

Tool Name	Description
Action Plan	▪ A goal-setting tool composed of a combination of sentence stems, questions, and prompts designed to help learners identify specific language-learning targets and timelines based on collected assessment data.
Chart	▪ A graphic organizer for representing learners' goals and achievements, performance criteria for tasks, learners' opinions and preferences. ▪ Can also be used for reviewing lessons, target language, content, etc. from a unit of work.
Checklist	▪ Can be used to track competencies and outcomes, task-specific criteria, learning preferences and strategies.
Exemplar	▪ A model which learners can refer to when making their own attempts

	at a language task.
Journal and Diary	▪ Learners record in a journal their understanding of the topic or lesson taught. ▪ The instructor can review the entry to see if the learner has understood topic and respond to the learners' writing. ▪ See Learning Log.
Learning Log	▪ Learners write journal entries summarizing what they have learned. ▪ Learners can comment on the strategies they used that were successful in aiding their learning and record experiences with English use outside of the classroom.
Rating scale	▪ Marking on a continuum. ▪ Two end points are assigned a meaning and performance is rated in relation to the two extremes.
Rubric	▪ A set of descriptors aligned with a rating scale or scoring guide. ▪ Used for measuring and describing proficiency in a specific task.
Questionnaires	▪ A set of questions for conducting needs analysis, getting information on learning style preferences, or gathering feedback on classroom activities and materials.
Self / Peer observation	▪ An activity in which the learner, using a clear set of criteria, assesses his or her performance of a task or that of a peer's using audio or video recordings or in-class performance.

Extracted from Learner Self-Assessment Toolkit (2007)

To sum up, as Gardner (1999) observes, due to the fact that autonomous learning is about taking responsibility for learning, an important aspect of the monitor process for learners is simply knowing how they are doing in their learning. Dickinson (1987, as cited in Gardner, 1999) has expressed a similar view: Self-evaluation of performance is an important skill for all language learners but of particular importance to autonomous language learners.

2.2.5   The multicultural and multilingual ESOL classroom

Coelho (2012) points out that an essential goal of education in multicultural and multilingual communities is the successful integration of students of all backgrounds into the larger society economically, socially, linguistically and culturally. There is increased awareness internationally that the economic and social well-being of many countries will partly depend on how well immigrant students are integrated academically and socially into their new environments and that this depends in large part on how well schools and teachers are prepared for the challenge (Coelho, 2012).

In a multicultural and multilingual ESOL classroom, students bring their cultural beliefs on learning and teaching as well as their own learning styles. For Li, Myles, & Robinson, (2012), no classroom is as challenging, complicated, and yet interesting as an ESOL classroom with teachers and students from diverse cultures. Both the teachers and the students are cultural beings whose expectations for one another may not always match due to the fact that their beliefs about language learning and teaching are shaped by their respective cultural bearings: what the teacher teaches may not be what the students want, and how the teacher teaches may not be what the students feel comfortable with (Li, Myles & Robinson, 2012). Such variations in the perceptions and practices in language learning raise the

question: Should ESOL teachers endeavor to correct their students' cultural perceptions and learning styles, or should they recognize these as different genres of learning and try to accommodate them in teaching (Li, Myles & Robinson, 2012)? Li, Myles, & Robinson (2012) indicate that, since the teacher's attitude towards their students' first cultures and their cultural practices affect learning substantially, cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of different cultural practices become essential to help boost students' confidence in themselves and their learning.

The view of fostering learner autonomy in multicultural and multilingual classrooms is also questioned by Harmer (2007) who claims that "If […] learning is conditioned both by the learner's educational culture and also by his or her individual learning styles and preferences, then the idea that all learners should be forced to become autonomous seems unnecessarily prescriptive. Why should learners who are, for whatever reason, reluctant to become autonomous, have autonomy thrust upon them?" (p.403) Harmer's (2007) answer to this dilemma is that educators should provide learners with a variety of opportunities for taking control of their own learning by developing their own learning strategies, and to do so often, with the knowledge that not all learners will embrace such opportunities with the same enthusiasm. In other words, taking into consideration that attitudes towards autonomous learning are frequently conditioned by the educational culture in which the students have studied or are studying, autonomy of action is not always considered a desirable characteristic in such contexts and teachers may encounter either passive or active resistance if they attempt to impose autonomous learning inappropriately (Harmer, 2007).

Serpil (2016), who also believes teacher training as central for successful language learning, reports the need of language teachers to find ways to address diversity in the multicultural and multilingual classroom with the purpose of ensuring cultural and linguistic relevance.

Regarding how teachers themselves can teach in the best culturally-relevant way, according to Serpil (2016), the literature suggests that teachers must break out of their 'cultural encapsulation,' by engaging in autobiographical exploration, reflection, and critical self-analysis.

Nieto (2000, as cited by Serpil, 2016) asserts that one must become a multicultural person before one can become a multicultural teacher through a transformational re-education by first learning more about people from accurate media outlets and cultural activities, and second, confronting unconscious racism. Multicultural education requires teachers to maximize the opportunities and minimize the challenges presented by diversity (Smith, 2009, as cited by Serpil, 2016). Sue and Sue (2008, as cited by Serpil, 2016) use the terminology 'cultural competence' to define the ability to create conditions to enable optimal development of students, which is possible by reflecting and improving in three areas: attitudes and beliefs of one's own cultural conditioning that affect personal beliefs, values and attitudes; understanding the worldviews of culturally diverse groups; and using culturally appropriate intervention strategies. Last but not least, Gay (2000) proposes the theory of 'culturally responsive teaching' as the route to improve ethnically diverse classrooms. In his theory, Gay (2000) defines 'culturally responsive teaching' as the teaching practices that use the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively.

Many scholars agree that the academic achievement of ethnically diverse students improves when they are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Gay, 2000, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 2009, 2014, as cited by Serpil, 2016). Though highly challenging, teachers need to know ethnic groups' cultural values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relational patterns, such as:

"(a) which ethnic groups give priority to communal living and cooperative problem solving and how these preferences affect educational motivation, aspiration, and task performance; (b) how different ethnic groups' protocols of appropriate ways for students to interact with others are exhibited in instructional settings; and (c) the implications of gender role socialization in different ethnic groups for implementing equity initiatives in classroom instruction. This information constitutes the first essential component of the knowledge base of culturally responsive teaching" (Gay, 2002).

Although cultural and linguistic diversity offers important opportunities for expanding cultural horizons and raising language awareness among all students, the potential for using it as an asset is seldom realised (Coelho, 2012). Minami & Ovando (2004, as cited by Serpil, 2016) suggest that since ESOL learners have to cope with the new culture and a new language, instead of viewing them through a deficit lens teachers need to be aware of not only their struggles but also the strengths that they bring into the classroom.

The truth is that when English is taught in multicultural and multilingual contexts such as those found in English speaking countries, as Cummins (2007) suggests, two inter-related assumptions regarding best practice in second language teaching continue to dominate classroom instruction: a) the target language (TL) should be used exclusively for instructional purposes without recourse to students' first language (L1) and b) translation between L1 and TL has no place in the language classroom. Students' L1 is not the enemy in promoting high levels of second language (L2) proficiency; rather, when students' L1 is invoked as a cognitive and linguistic resource through bilingual instructional strategies, it

can function as a stepping stone to scaffold more accomplished performance in the L2 (Cummins, 2007). L1 is an important component of personal and cultural identity, as such; its use should be encouraged by creating educational environments that celebrate language diversity (Coelho, 2012).

3. THE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

The study investigates to what extent teachers implement strategies and techniques in the multilingual and multicultural ESOL classroom that effectively promote the development of learner autonomy. The study was carried out in two government funded, community-based, non-profit organization Multicultural Centers located in the Province of Ontario, Canada.

The government of Canada, in co-operation with local school boards, community colleges, immigrants and community organizations, offers free French and English language training to immigrants, convention refugees and adult permanent residents across Canada. Most Multicultural Centers, which usually provide free settlement services for newcomers as they strive to create a new life in Canada, offer the LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) program.

The LINC program does not only aim at helping newcomers develop language skills but also fosters their social, cultural and economic integration into the Canadian society. With full-time and part-time lessons available, LINC offers continuous intake of learners, which means that new adult immigrants can join the corresponding course according to their English language level at any time and at any age.

CLB (Canadian Language Benchmarks), which are a set of language ability performance standards in ESL (English as a Second Language), with levels ranging from 1 (Beginner) to 12 (Advanced), provide the framework for the LINC curriculum. Benchmarks 1 to 4 encompass the development of basic language ability, Benchmarks 5 to 8 are aimed at developing intermediate language ability and Benchmarks 9 to 12 develop advanced

language ability.   According to the CLB (Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012), the CLB standard provides:

1)   a set of descriptive statements about successive levels on the continuum of language ability,

2)   a description of communicative competencies and performance tasks through which learners demonstrate application of language knowledge (i.e., competence) and skill (i.e., ability),

3)   a national standard for planning curricula for language instruction in a variety of contexts,

4)   a framework of reference for learning, teaching, programming and assessing ESL in Canada.

With regard to the research implementation, even though Multicultural Centers are very popular and easy to access in Canada, to be granted authorization to do the observations proved to be a complex procedure. The applications to conduct the field study were submitted at least six months in advance and the thesis plan was attached to the forms. The admission process was revised by a board on each occasion and there were varied factors that influenced their decision. The first reason why two centers declined the request of the researcher was based on students' confidentiality issues, as many of the students could not understand English, they considered it unethical for the students to be observed without their absolute knowledge. Another institution denied access to the classrooms because they considered that the presence of someone with whom the students were not familiar might interfere with the learning and teaching process. Three other centers were in the process of implementing a new program under new authorities and informed that no studies would be

allowed in those centers until the programs were fully implemented in 2018. Two Multicultural Centers granted permission for classroom observations. However, the authorities explained that teachers were not obliged to participate in the study and that they could opt out if they wanted to. They also explained that confidentiality as regards the institution, the staff and the students had to be guaranteed in writing and that permission could be revoked at any time for any reason they considered valid.

3.2 Participants

A group of ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers and their students participating in the LINC program at two Multicultural Centers in the Province of Ontario, Canada, were selected as the study population. The teachers participating in the study were all native speakers of English. Students participating in the study were immigrants from different nationalities who had recently moved to Canada and were studying English as other language. Teachers delivered lessons to the same group three hours a day, fifteen hours weekly.

Out of the six teachers randomly consulted to take part of the study, four accepted to be observed during their delivering of their lessons. The four different classes that were observed at the Multicultural Centers for a total of sixteen hours were the following: a) English Literacy for Beginners with six students in the class, targeted at those immigrants who had never learned how to read or write in their home countries or at those immigrants who were not familiar with the Roman alphabet, b) Benchmarks 1 and 2 with sixteen students in the class, c) Benchmarks 3 and 4 with fifteen students in the class and d) Benchmarks 5+ with twelve students in the class.

Five out of the six teachers were willing to respond the questionnaire and three of them agreed to be interviewed. The researcher was not allowed to interact with the students in any form and the students could not actively participate in the study, that is to say, for example, they were not allowed to respond to any questionnaire or survey. The researcher was not allowed to interfere in any way with the normal procedure of the delivery of the lesson.

3.3 Data collection

The different data collection methods used to make triangulation possible and increase validity and reliability were: a) self-completion questionnaires for the teachers, b) direct classroom observations, and c) informal and semi-structured interviewing with the teachers. Holec (1981), Gardner (1999), Cotterall (1995, 2000), Benson (2001, 2003), Scharle and Szabó (2000), Gay (2002), Numan (1996, 2003), Harmer (2007), Cummins (2007), Reinders (2010, 2011), Kilner and Drew (2012), Coelho (2012), Maftoon & Sarem, (2012), Li, Myles & Robinson, (2012), Espinosa (2012, 2015) and Serpil (2016) were the authors consulted to prepare the different data collection methods.

All the information collected through the three different methods aimed at learning about the different teaching strategies and techniques implemented in the multilingual and multicultural ESOL classroom to promote the development of learner autonomy.

Firstly, self-completion multiple choice questionnaires were distributed to five teachers at the beginning of the observations and they were returned to the researcher in the last week before completing the classroom observations. The purpose of the questionnaire, which included twenty questions, was to gather as much detailed information as possible as regards teachers' techniques and strategies for the development learner autonomy (See Appendix 1).

Secondly, data was collected from sixteen hours of direct classroom observations for a one month period. The information collected focused on the techniques and strategies teachers implemented in their professional practices to promote the development of learner autonomy. The non-participant observations consisted of taking down notes of all the events happening in class which were deemed to be relevant to the analysis of the research questions using a data collection sheet (See Appendix 2).

Lastly, informal teacher interviews were conducted as for the general context of the LINC program, together with semi-structured interviews to further examine teachers' strategies and techniques for the development of learner autonomy. The teachers were interviewed either before and /or after observations for approximately ten minutes on the day their lessons took place and their answers were jotted down during the interviews. The features taken into account for the semi-structured interviews coincided with the aspects considered during classroom observations (See Appendix 3).

The information collected through direct classroom observations, self-completion questionnaires for the teachers and informal and semi-structured interviewing with the teachers was contrasted and compared for an in depth analysis.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

In this section, the results obtained from the three instruments of the data collection are presented and cross-examined. First, section 4.1 focuses on presenting the results obtained from the self-completion questionnaires for the teachers; section 4.2 reveals the results obtained from the direct classroom observations; section 4.3 shows the data collected through informal and semi-structured interviewing with the teachers; and section 4.4 analyses the information collected through triangulation of data and discusses the findings of the study.

4.1 Questionnaires for the teachers results

The multiple choice questionnaire, administered to five ESOL teachers, aimed at exploring and studying the different teachers' strategies and techniques that ESOL teachers used in the multilingual and multicultural classroom and determining what role those strategies and techniques played in effectively promoting the development of learner autonomy (See Appendix 1). The questionnaire, which contained 20 questions divided into four main areas of study, also intended to collect information that could provide the researcher with an insight about the teachers' view of their own practices.

Questions 1 to 5

The general objective of questions 1 to 5 was to gather information pertaining to the teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for planning the learning process. More

specifically, the questionnaire intended to determine the degree of participation that teachers granted students in the planning stage of the teaching and learning process.

Question 1

The first statement aimed at finding out how often the teachers used students' needs assessment to plan lessons. By learning this, the researcher intended to determine to what extent teachers designed their planning with the learners' needs in mind. The following options were given: *a) never, b) sometimes, c) usually and d) always.* *Graph 1* shows that 60% of the teachers surveyed 'sometimes' use student's needs assessment to plan lessons whereas 40% of them 'usually' do it.
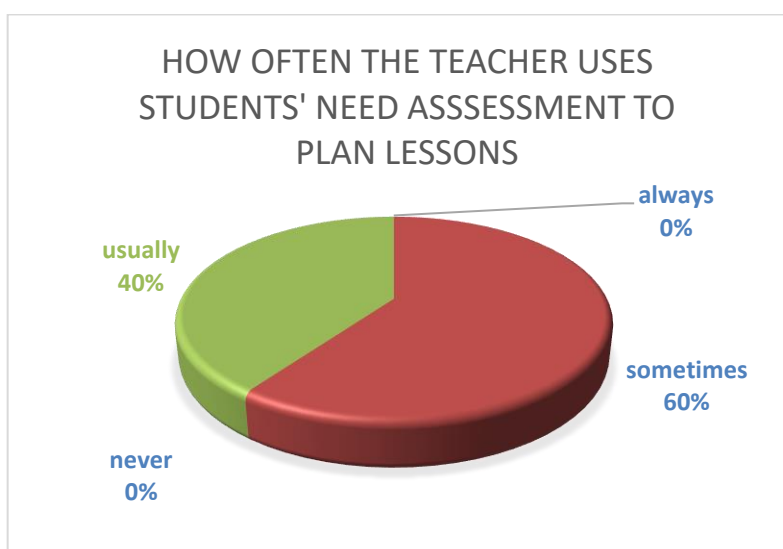

Graph 1: How often the teacher uses students' needs assessment to plan lessons

Question 2

In question 2 the teachers were asked how often teachers invited students to contribute to designing their lesson planning. As a way of developing autonomous learning habits,

students should gradually become part of the planning stage of their learning process. The alternatives provided were: *a) never, b) sometimes, c) usually and d) always. Graph 2* indicates that 40% of the teachers 'always' invite students to contribute to designing their lesson planning, another 40% 'usually' do it and only a 20% of the teachers questioned responded that they 'sometimes' invite students to contribute to planning lessons.
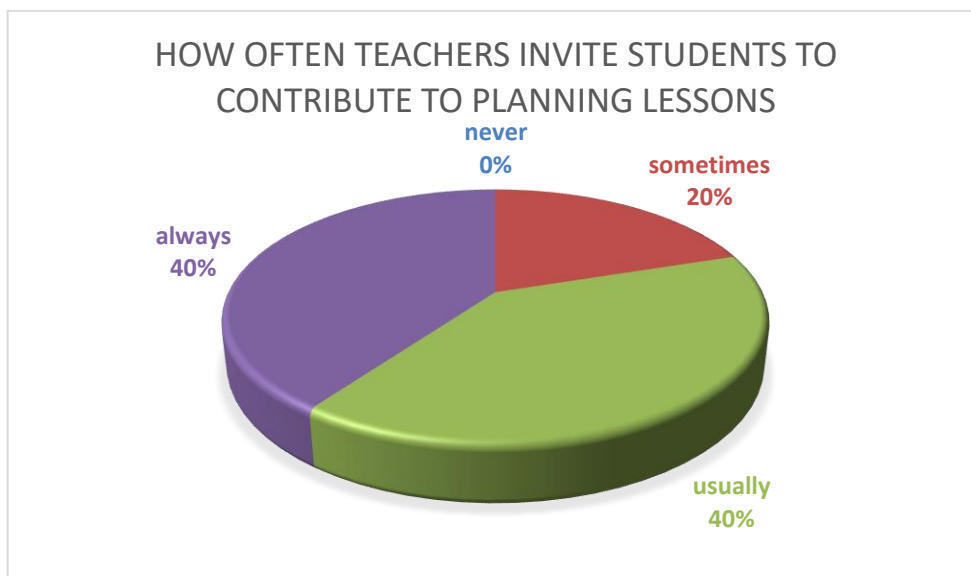
Graph 2: How often teachers invite students to contribute to lesson planning

Question 3

The intention of this true or false statement was to determine whether the teachers had a flexible curriculum to follow or not. The truth of the matter is that, for a teacher to implement strategies and techniques to foster autonomy, it might be necessary to have a curriculum that accompanies teachers' practices. Results shown in *Graph 3* indicate that 80% of the respondents have a flexible curriculum to follow as opposed to the 20% percent of teachers who believe the curriculum to be not flexible.
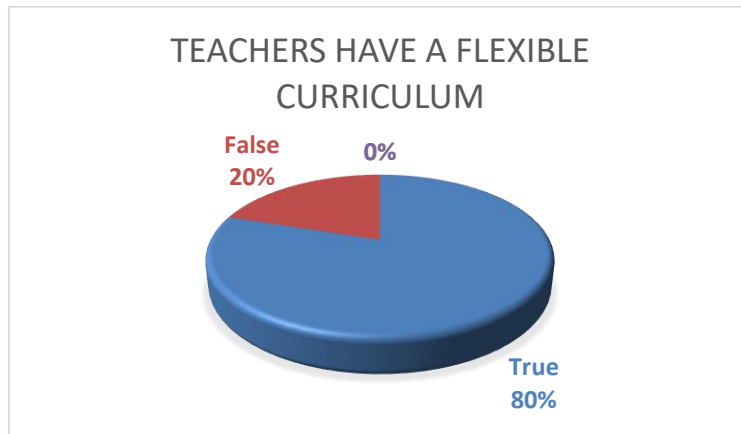
Graph 3: Teachers have a flexible curriculum

Question 4

In question 4 the respondents were asked to identify who determined the objectives of the course. The data obtained from this question was relevant to learn the degree of participation in the planning stage assigned to the learner, the teachers and the institution. The respondents had to choose from the following options: *a) the institution, b) the teacher, c) the learner, d) the institution and the teacher, e) the teacher and the learner and f) the institution, the teacher and the learner.* As displayed in *Graph 4,* 40% of the participants indicate that the institution is in charge of determining the objectives of the course, 20% suggest that the institution and the teacher are responsible for course objectives, another 20% reveal that the teacher and the learner determine the goals of the course and the last 20% show that the responsibility for determining the objectives of the course is shared amongst the institution the teacher and the learner. It is worth noticing that the learner as an option was not chosen by any of the participants.
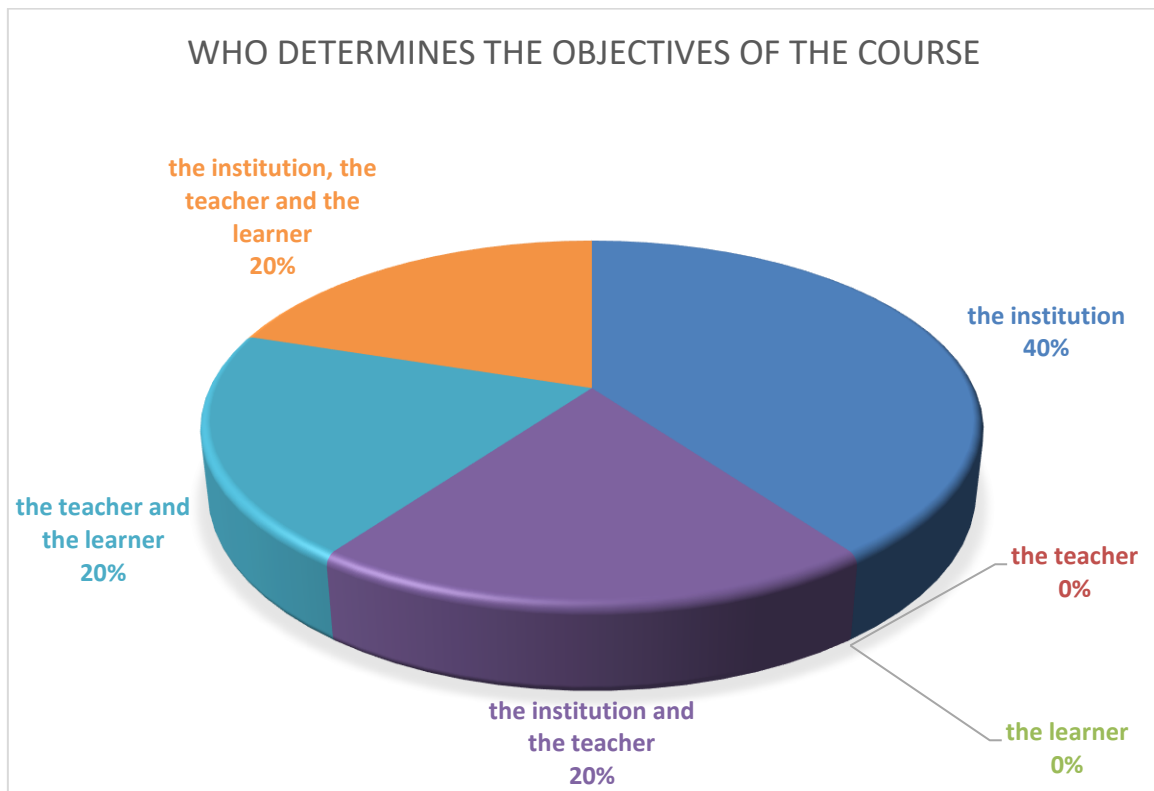
Graph 4: Who determines the objectives of the course

Question 5

Question 5 aimed at eliciting who provided the learning resources used in the classroom. Through this question the researcher intended to know to what extent the learners, the teachers and the institution were involved in selecting classroom materials. Participants could choose from the following options: *a) the institution, b) the teacher, c) the learner, d) the institution and the teacher, e) the teacher and the learner and f) the institution, the teacher and the learner. Graph 5* reveals that 60% of the teachers agreed that the institution and the teacher are the providers of the learning resources whereas 40% believed it is only the institution.

WHO PROVIDES THE LEARNING RESOURCES

the institution, the teacher and the learner
0%

the teacher and the learner
0%

the institution
40%

the institution and the teacher
60%

the teacher
0%
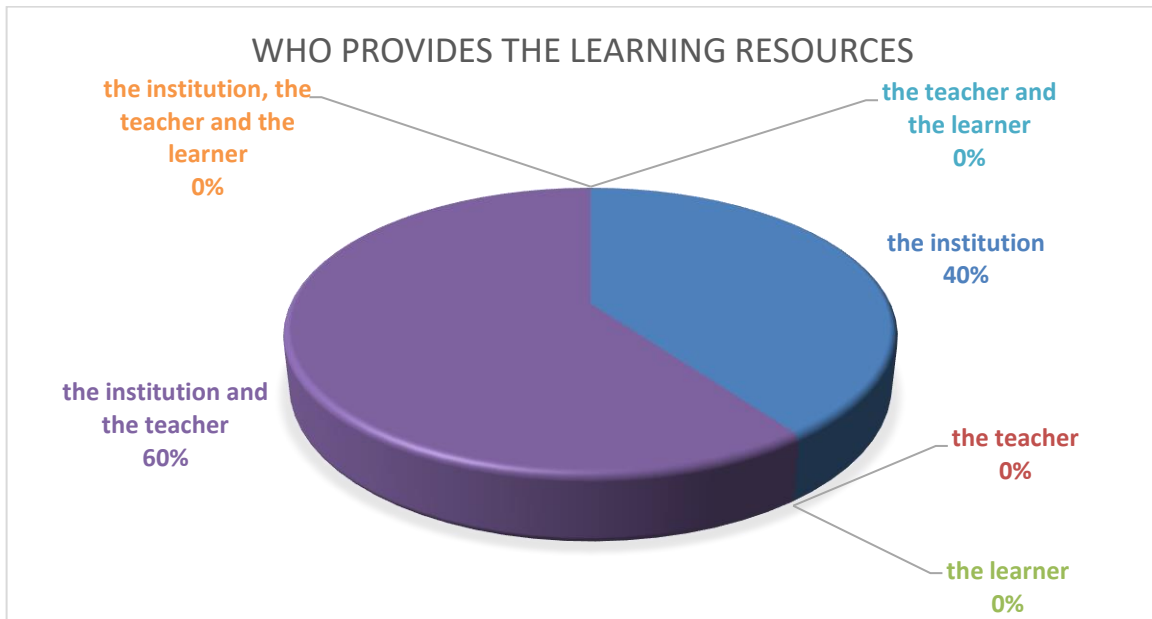
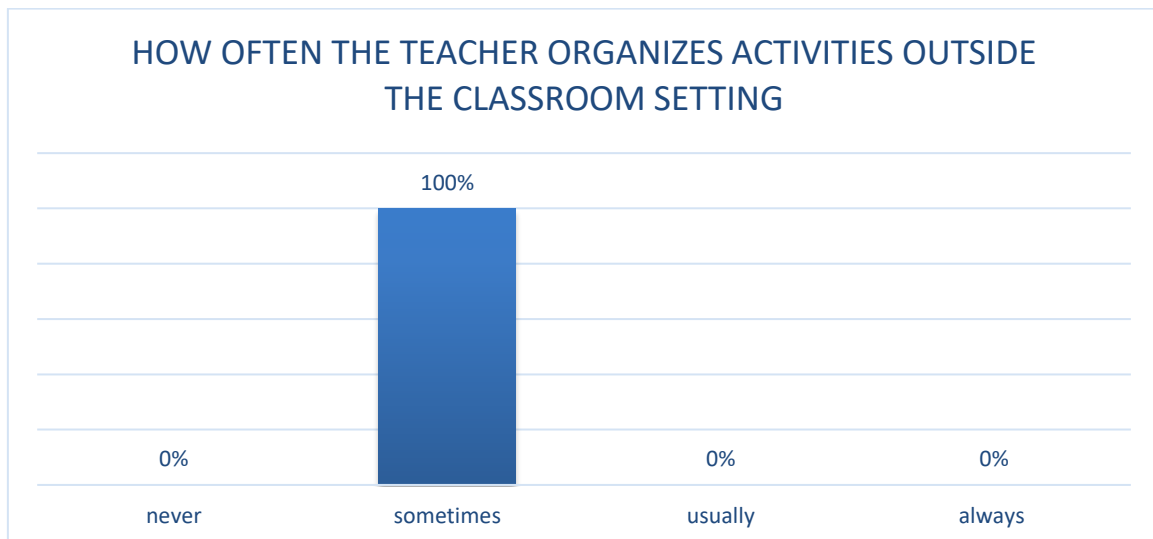the learner
0%

Graph 5: Who provides the learning resources

Questions 6 to 10

The general purpose of questions 6 to 10 was to learn about some of the teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for developing students' responsibility as one of the possible ways to foster learner autonomy.

Question 6

Since exposing students to real-world situations might motivate learners to become more willing to take responsibility for their outcome, question 6 aimed at learning about the frequency the teacher organized activities outside the classroom setting as way to motivate students. The options provided were: *a) never, b) sometimes, c) usually and d) always. Graph 6* shows that 100% of the teachers consulted agreed on the fact those teachers 'sometimes' organize activities outside the classroom setting.

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HOW OFTEN THE TEACHER ORGANIZES ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM SETTING

	100%		
0%		0%	0%
never	sometimes	usually	always

Graph 6: How often the teacher organizes activities outside the classroom setting

Question 7

An important aspect of developing responsible attitudes is by setting clear short and long term goals together with the students. When teachers give students the opportunity to feel identified with the aims, the learners feel more responsible for the outcome. It is the purpose of question 7 to elicit how often the teacher sets clear short and long term goals together with the students. The options available were: *a) never, b) sometimes, c) usually and d) always. Graph 7* represents that 40% of the respondents 'never' negotiate short and long term goals with the students whereas 60% of them admit that they 'sometimes' do. It may seem important to highlight that respondents did not consider the negotiation of goals a common practice.

HOW OFTEN THE TEACHER NEGOTIATES SHORT AND LONG TERM GOALS WITH THE STUDENTS

60%

40%

0%   0%

never   sometimes   usually   always
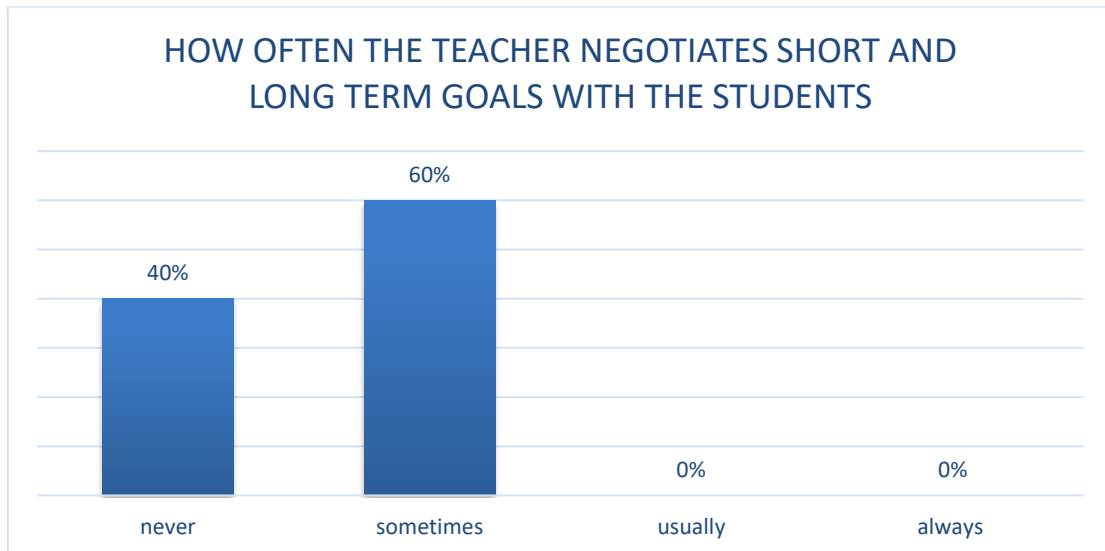
Graph 7: How often the teacher negotiates short and long term goals with the students
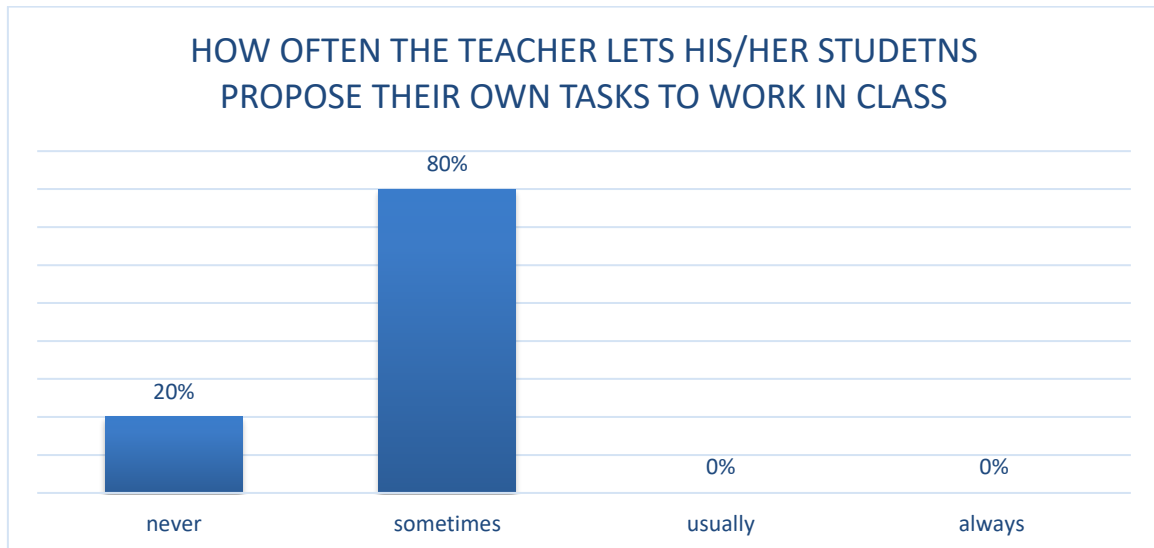
Question 8

As a computer with internet access can serve as a valuable resource towards developing autonomous habits, teaching how to seize on line learning opportunities responsibly might result in students becoming more committed to learning. Question 8 was meant to find out how often students used the internet to do research in class. *a) never, b) sometimes, c) usually and d) always.* As seen in *Graph 8,* the results revealed that 20% of the teachers do not use internet in class to do research and that 80% of them 'sometimes' do so.

HOW OFTEN STUDENTS USE INTERNET IN CLASS TO DO REASEARCH

80%

20%

0%   0%

never   sometimes   usually   always
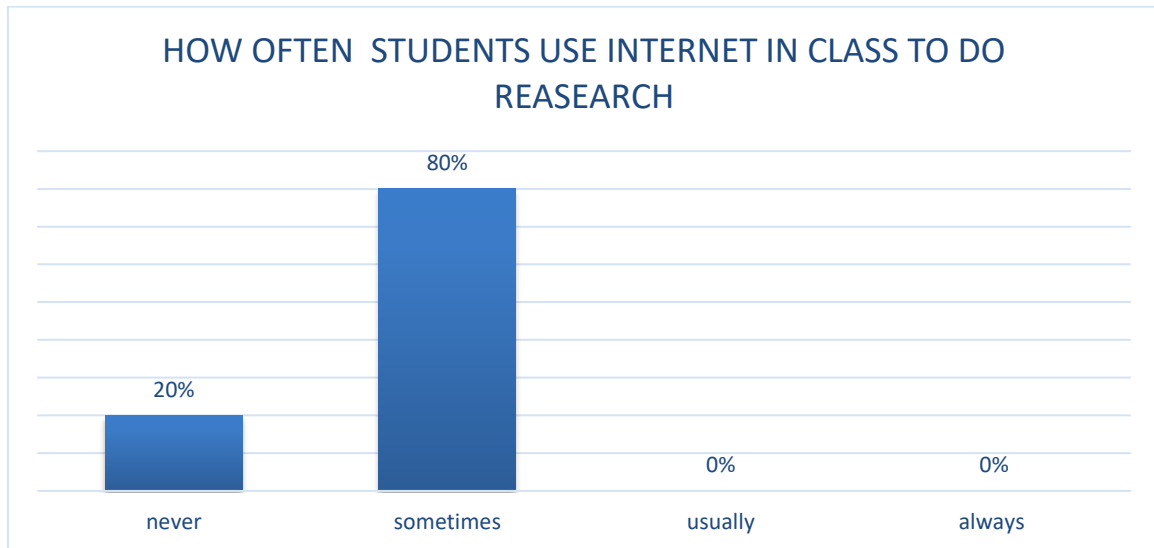
*Graph 8: How often students use internet in class to do research*

Question 9

Question 9 had the objective of eliciting how often the teacher let his/her students propose their own tasks to work in class. The purpose of this question was to learn to what extent the teacher delegated his/her responsibility as a task designer to the learners. The teachers were given these alternatives: *a) never, b) sometimes, c) usually and d) always. Graph 9* illustrates that 20% of the teachers 'never' let his/her students propose their own tasks to work in class while 80% of the participants stated that they 'sometimes' allow his/ her students to propose their own tasks to work in class.

HOW OFTEN THE TEACHER LETS HIS/HER STUDETNS PROPOSE THEIR OWN TASKS TO WORK IN CLASS

Graph 9: How often the teacher lets his/her students propose their own tasks to work in class

Question 10

Since encouraging learning outside the classroom setting might not only foster responsible attitudes but can also help students move away from dependency, question 10 enquired how often the teachers assigned homework (e.g.: worksheets, tasks outside the classroom setting or activities in a self- access center) to the learners. The choices were: *a) never, b) sometimes, c) usually and d) always. Graph 10* displays that 40% of the participants 'never' assign homework to the learners, another 40% revealed that they 'sometimes' do and 20% answered that they 'usually' assign homework to the learners.

HOW OFTEN THE TEACHER ASSIGNS HOMEWORK TO THE THE LEARNERS

never	sometimes	usually	always
40%	40%	20%	0%
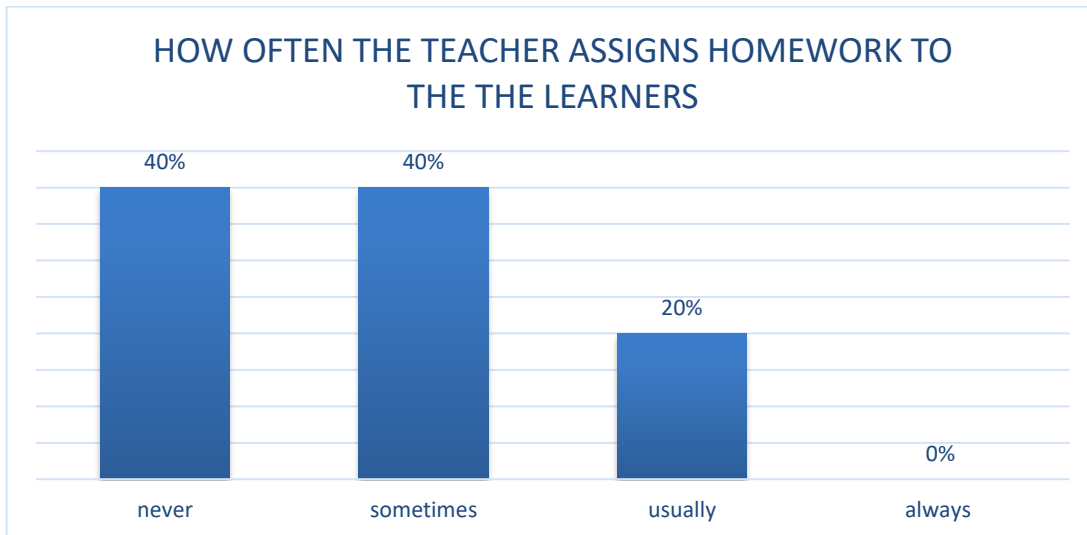
*Graph 10: How often teachers assign homework to the learners*

Questions 11 to 15

Questions 11 to 15 were intended to collect data referred to the teachers' strategies and techniques implemented so that teachers and students were able to monitor and assess the learner's progress. The potential for students to take more control over their learning may increase when, through different activities, teachers and learners gather information concerning learners' performance and achievements, reflect on this information and use their findings to plan for future actions.

Question 11

The aim of statement 11 was to learn whether the teachers and the students could regularly monitor the students' work by providing students with self-assessment tools such as questionnaires, checklists or charts. In *Graph 11* it is visualized that 60% of the teachers responded that their students can regularly monitor their own work by using questionnaires,

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checklists or charts in contrast to the 40 % of teachers who revealed that their students cannot undertake such practice.
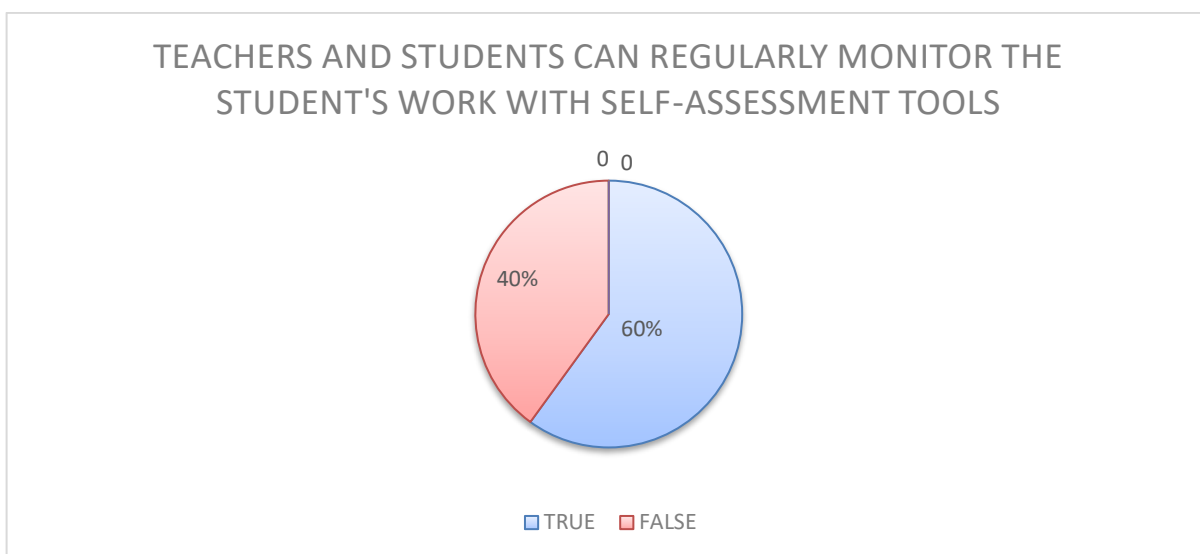

Graph 11: Teachers and the students can regularly monitor the students' work by providing the students with self-assessment tools

Question 12

The objective of statement 12 was to check whether students were encouraged to take self-assessment tests regularly or not. *Graph 12* shows that 40% of the surveyed teachers encourage their students to take self- assessment tests while the other 60% do not promote it.

STUDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE SELF-ASSESSMENT
TESTS REGULARLY

0 0

40%

60%

☐ TRUE ☐ FALSE
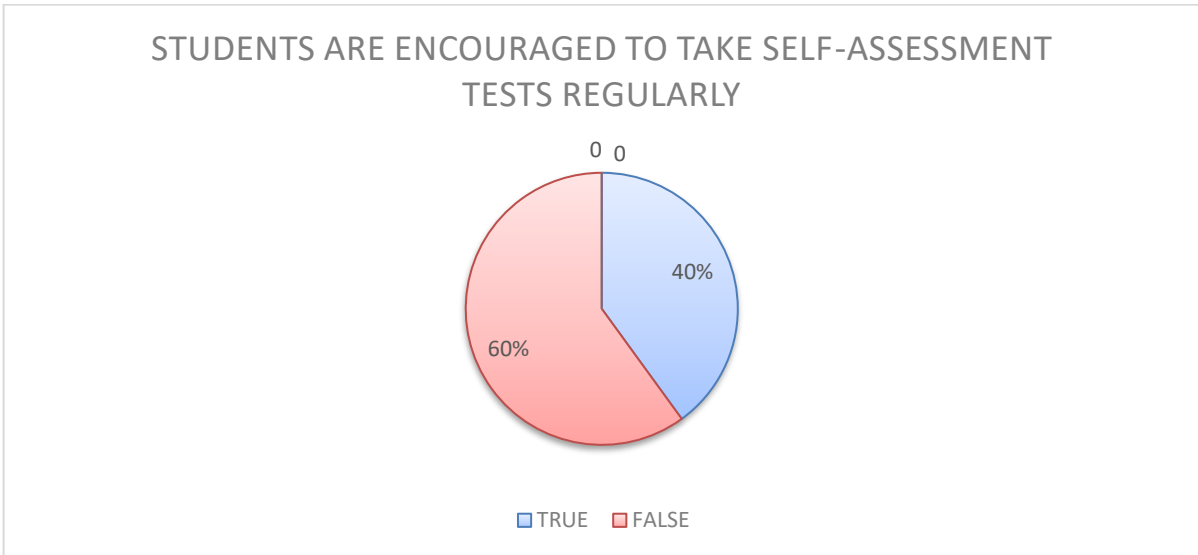
Graph 12: Students are encouraged to take self-assessment tests regularly
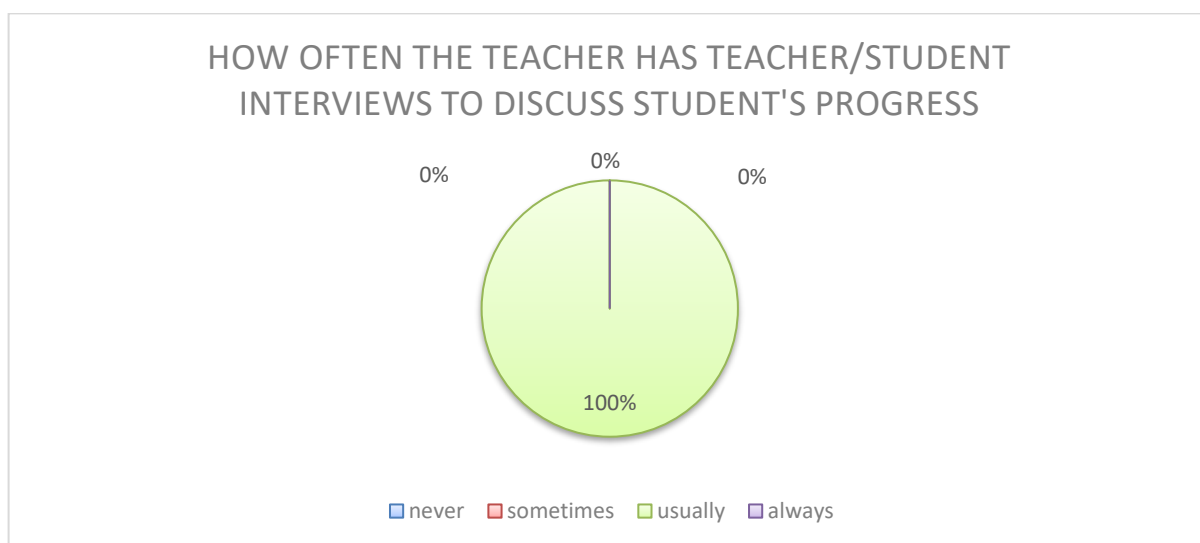
Question 13

The aim of question 13 was to find out how often the teacher promoted peer assessment in class as a way to train students towards self-assessment. The given options were: *a) never, b) sometimes, c) usually and d) always. Graph 13* illustrates that 80% of the respondents 'sometimes' promote peer assessment in class and 20% stated that they 'usually' do it.

HOW OFTEN THE TEACHER PROMOTES
PEER ASSESSMENT IN CLASS

0% 0%

20%

80%

☐ never ☐ sometimes ☐ usually ☐ always
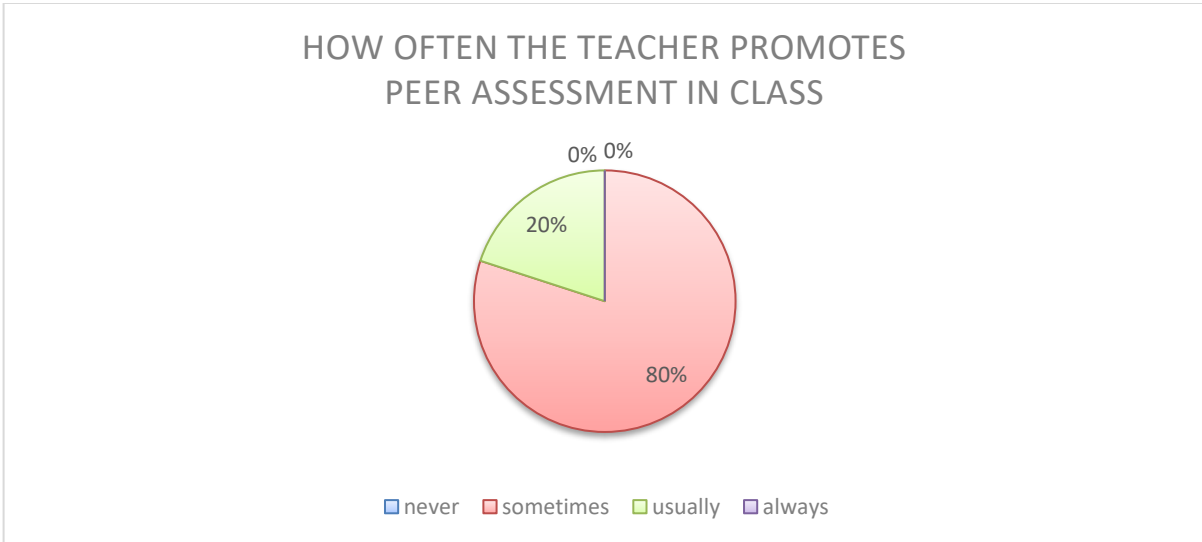
Graph 13: How often the teacher promotes peer assessment in class

Question 14

Question 14 addressed the issue of reflecting upon the teaching and learning process. Teachers were asked how often they held teacher/student interviews to discuss student's progress. The options given were: *a) never, b) sometimes, c) usually and d) always. Graph 14* denotes that 100% of the participants 'usually' carry out teacher/student interviews to discuss student's progress.


HOW OFTEN THE TEACHER HAS TEACHER/STUDENT INTERVIEWS TO DISCUSS STUDENT'S PROGRESS

0%   0%   0%

100%

☐ never ☐ sometimes ☐ usually ☐ always

Graph 14: How often the teacher holds teacher/student interviews to discuss student's progress.

Question 15

Learners might find summative assessment a useful assessment tool since the results obtained from such evaluation reflect their academic achievement at the end of any instructional period (e.g. end of project, end of unit or end of course). The aim of question 15 was to enquire about the moment in which formal summative evaluation took place. Participants were asked to choose from the following options: *a) when the teacher believes the student is ready, b) when the student believes he/she is ready, c) when the teacher and*

the student agree that the student is ready and d) when the institution schedules the evaluation. Graph 15 illustrates that 60% of the teachers surveyed stated that formal summative assessment takes place when both the teacher and the student agree that the student is ready to be evaluated and 40% of the participants selected the option that indicated that formal summative evaluation takes place when the teacher believes the student is ready. Nevertheless, the choice that indicated that formal summative assessment took place when the institution scheduled the evaluation was not selected by any of the respondents.
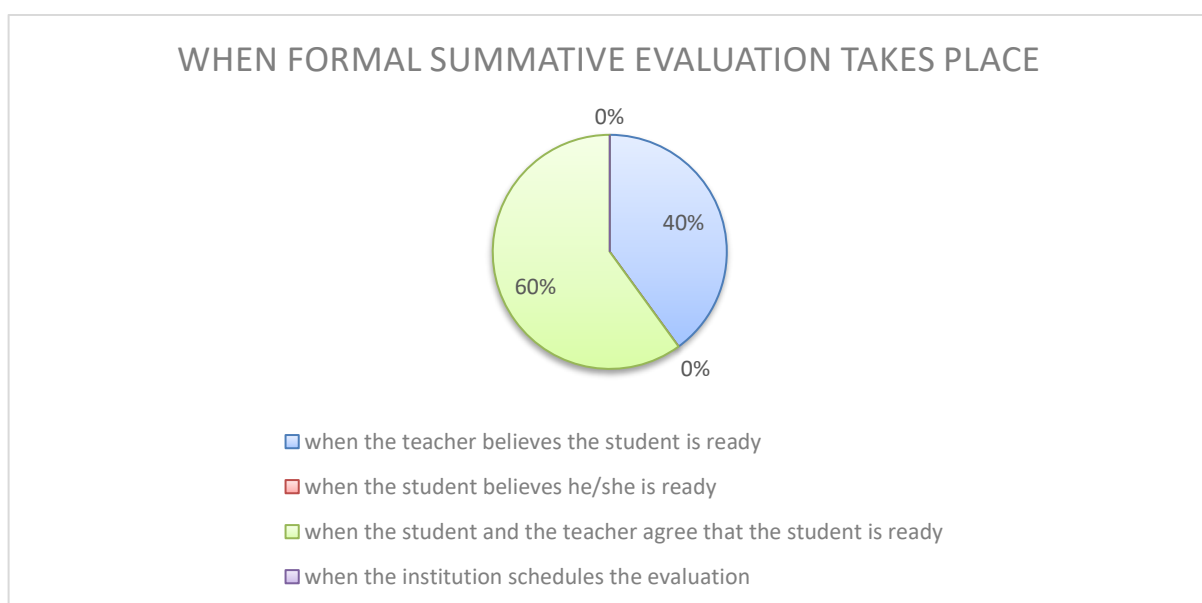

Graph 15: When formal summative evaluation takes place

Questions 16 to 20

The last set of questions, questions 16 to 20, were meant to enquire about the teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which cross-cultural understanding and linguistic diversity were valued and appreciated as well as to learn about the teacher's perception regarding teaching multicultural and multilingual classes.

Question 16

Taking into account that in multicultural and multilingual ESOL classrooms students bring their cultural beliefs on learning and teaching, providing students with a variety of opportunities for taking control of their own learning strategies might be beneficial for their progress. That is why question 16 focused on gaining knowledge regarding how often students were offered alternative tasks to choose from during class time. Even though four alternatives were given: *a) never, b) sometimes, c) usually and d) always, Graph 16* shows that 100% of the teachers who participated in the survey 'sometimes' offer student alternative tasks.

HOW OFTEN STUDENTS ARE GIVEN ALTERNATIVE TASKS

always		
usually		
sometimes	█████████████	
never		

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%   120%
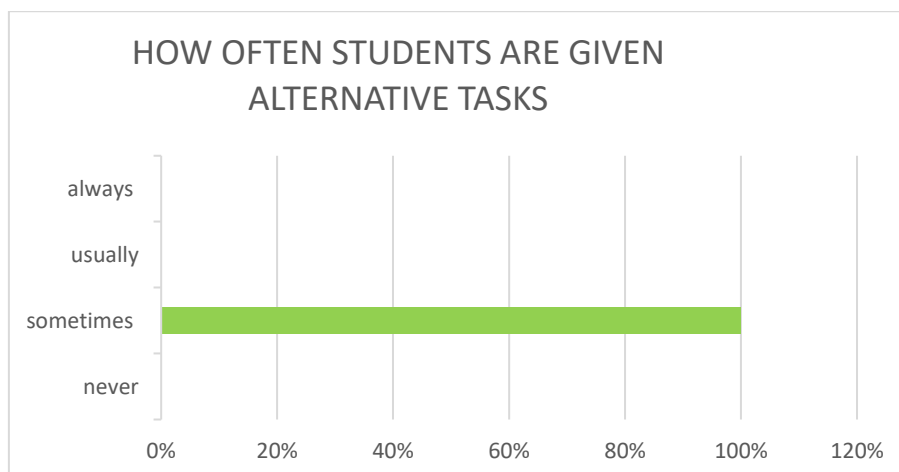
Graph 16: How often student are given alternative tasks

Question 17

Pair and group work might not only facilitate integration of immigrant students of all backgrounds into their new environments but it may also foster cross cultural communication. The aim of question 17 was to learn how often the teacher proposed students to implement this practice. The suggested alternatives were: *a) never, b) sometimes, c) usually and d) always.* As shown in *Graph 17*, 40% of the participants

responded that their students 'usually' work in pairs or in groups while 60% admitted that they 'sometimes' propose to implement that practice.
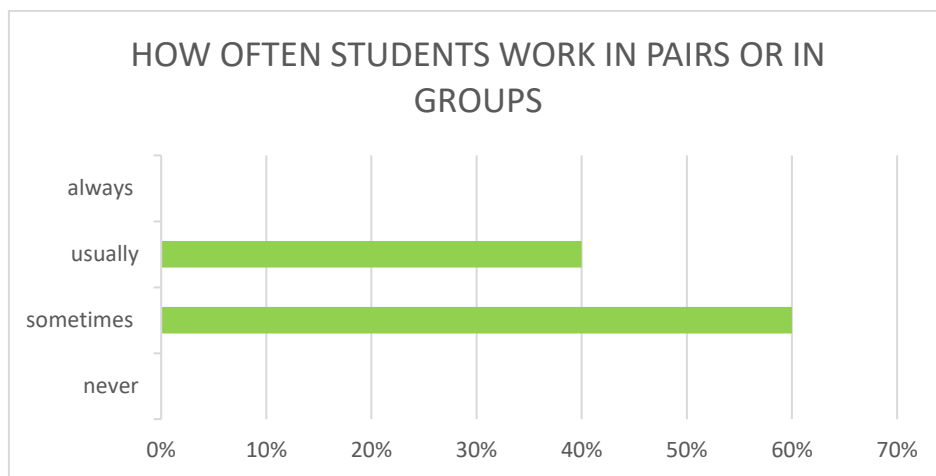
*Graph 17: How often students work in pairs or in groups*

Question 18

Question 18 had the intention of viewing teacher's perception of teaching a cultural diverse group of learners. The options given were: *a) easy, b) challenging, c) difficult and d) demanding*. In *Graph 18,* 40% of the answers collected described the teaching practices of a cultural diverse class as 'easy' whereas 60% of them view their practices as 'challenging'. However, none of the teachers perceived teaching a cultural diverse class as neither 'difficult' nor 'demanding'.
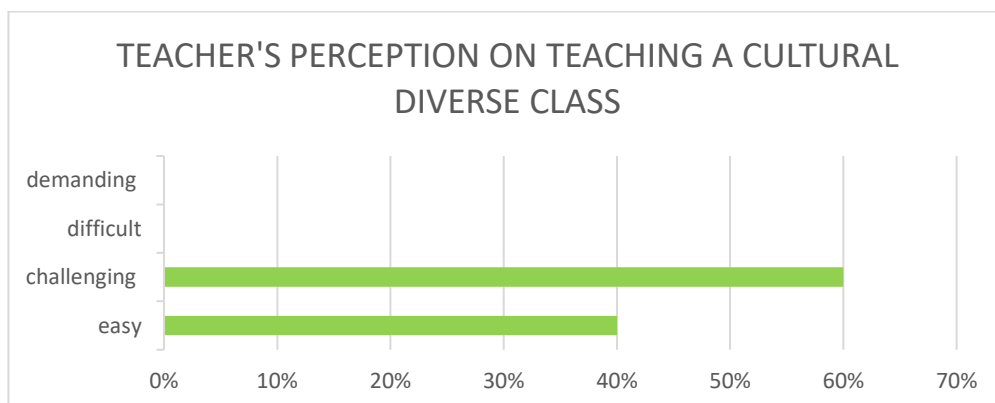
Graph 18: Teacher's perception on teaching a cultural diverse class

Question 19

Question 19 intended to view teacher's perception as regards teaching a class with dissimilar linguistic backgrounds.   The participants had the following options to choose from: *a) easy, b) challenging, c) difficult and d) demanding*. From the results displayed on *Graph 19* it can be inferred that whereas 60% of the participants view teaching a class with linguistic background differences 'challenging', there was 20% of them who find it 'difficult' and another 20% who find it 'demanding'.
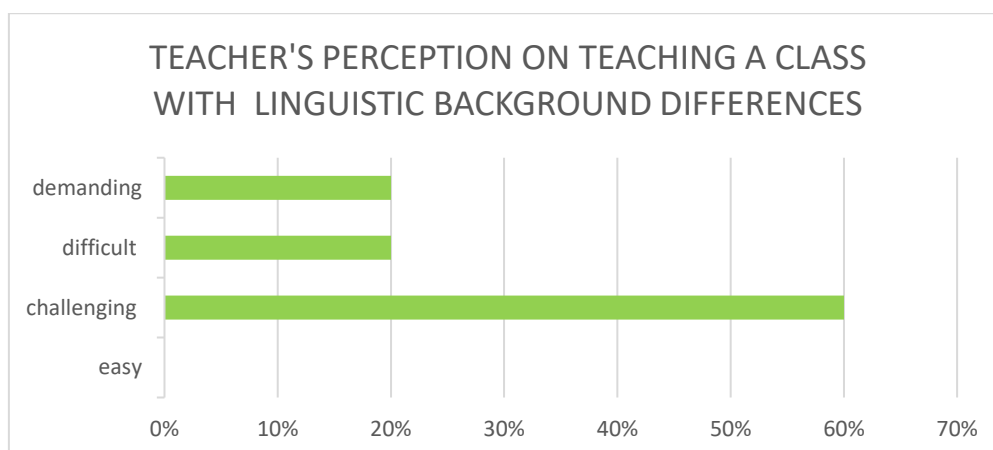
Graph 19: Teacher's perception on teaching a class with linguistic background differences

Question 20

Question 20 attempted to have an overview of the teacher's perception on his/her cultural competence. For this purpose, teachers were asked how familiar they were with the cultural backgrounds of the students that they were teaching at that moment. The following are the given options: *a) I am not familiar with any of them, b) I am familiar with some of them, c) I am familiar with most of them and d) I am familiar with all of them.   Graph 20* shows that

100% of the teachers expressed that they are familiar with 'some' of the cultural backgrounds of the students they were teaching at that moment.
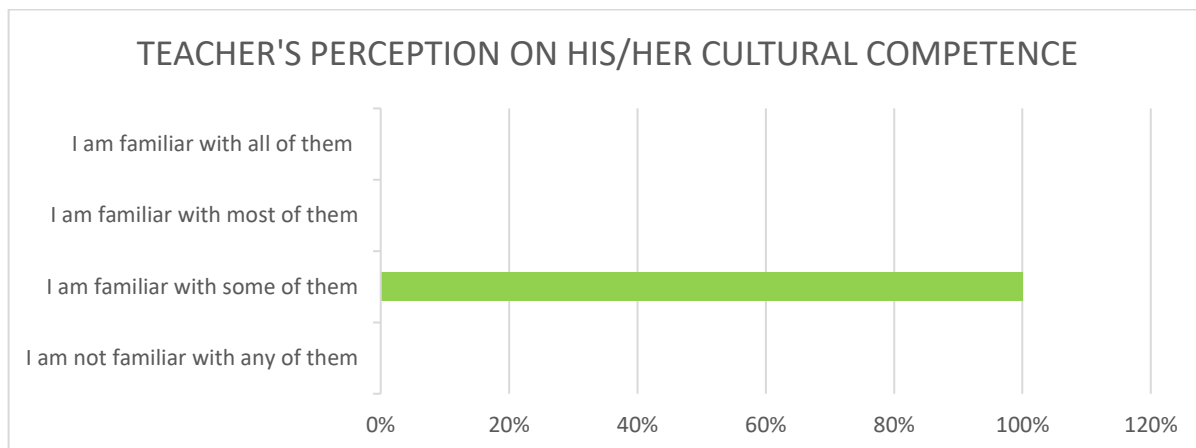
Graph 20: Teacher's perception on his/her cultural competence

4.2 Classroom observations

In order to collect direct evidence on the different strategies and techniques that the teacher used to foster learner autonomy, four multicultural and multilingual ESOL classes and their teachers were observed at two different multicultural centers. In order to gather only the relevant features for the study, a data collection sheet with the following characteristics was created (See Appendix 2). The features listed on the data collection sheet were ticked as 'observed' or 'not observed' by the researcher during the observation:

a) The first area of observation focused on the *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for planning the learning process*. More specifically, the observation intended to study in which ways the teacher made the students participate in that process. The following list comprises the possible strategies and techniques that teachers *implemented / did not implement* when planning for the development of learner autonomy:

➢ Uses spaces and resources of the institution for the development of autonomy.

➢ Assesses the autonomy profile of the students.

➢ Allows learners to create their own goals or allows students to have a say in setting goals.

➢ Allows students to propose their own materials and activities to work in the classroom.

➢ Provides students with alternative tasks to cater for different learning styles.

➢ Creates real world communicative tasks.

b) Secondly, the section concerning *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for developing students' responsibility* aimed to gather information pertaining how the teacher encouraged students to become responsible learners. Below is a list that details the possible strategies and techniques that teachers *implemented / did not implement* when they aimed at developing responsible attitudes that would eventually lead to learner autonomy:

➢ Raises awareness about sharing responsibility for the teaching and learning process.

➢ Encourages the use of self-access materials.

➢ Encourages learners to seize learning opportunities outside the educational facility.

➢ Assigns homework.

➢ Delegates tasks and decisions.

➢ Shares clear short and long term objectives.

➢ Makes students develop a responsible attitude.

➢ Encourages learners to become researchers.

c) Thirdly, the purpose of collecting data on *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for monitoring and assessing students' progress* was to learn to what extent teachers made learners participate in activities aimed at gathering information about their

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own learning and in activities about making judgements about their own performance and abilities. The list that follows names the possible strategies and techniques that teachers *implemented / did not implement* for monitoring and assessing learner's progress:

➢ Provides feedback constantly.

➢ Promotes peer-assessment.

➢ Creates or proposes self- assessments tasks.

➢ Encourages students to keep track of their work.

➢ Promotes learner/teacher dialogue reflection on language learning.

d) The last aspect of observation concentrated on *watching teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which cultural and linguistic diversity were valued and appreciated*. The goal of this observation was to learn to what extent the teacher used cultural characteristics, experiences and perspectives of cultural and linguistically diverse students to teach more effectively in the multicultural and multilingual classroom. The next items present a list that describes the possible strategies and techniques that teachers *implemented / did not implement* when teaching their classes:

➢ Uses culture and linguistic diversity as an asset to generate varied tasks.

➢ Encourages the use of L1 as a cognitive and linguistic resource.

➢ Shows cross cultural awareness.

➢ Appreciates different cultural practices.

➢ Gives students optional tasks to cater for the cultural and linguistic diverse classroom

➢ Promotes pair work or group work.

It may seem important to mention that even though the focus of the observation was on the teacher's techniques and strategies, the description of certain students' behaviours can also

reflect the implementation of a certain teacher strategy or technique on the part of the teacher. Apart from that, the researcher's comments referring to those teacher's strategies and techniques that were not seen do not imply that those strategies and techniques were not used by the teacher, it only means that at the moment of the observations the teachers did not implement those strategies and techniques.

As described in section 3.3, four different groups were observed and the following is a recount of the most relevant events that took place during the direct classroom observations:

Group 1

The multicultural and multilingual ESOL class which corresponded to English Literacy for Beginners was observed for a total of four hours on two different days. It is noteworthy that that the learners in this classroom were learning literacy skills together with the English language. There were six adult students, who due to different linguistic backgrounds, were unable to communicate among themselves; therefore, their voices were hardly ever heard. As a result, this was a very quiet and slow-paced class which appeared to be very dependent on the teacher at all times, while students participated in the lesson silently but attentively.

a) The result obtained from observing the different *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for planning the learning process* indicated that the teacher made good use of the spaces and resources of the institution for the development of autonomy since students were invited to stay at the center if they pleased to do any form of work. Students were informed they could use the library, the computer room or the lunchroom until 3PM. It was also observed that the teacher was well aware of the autonomy profile of the students by providing assistance only when she detected that the students were having difficulties in

fulfilling their tasks; otherwise, she let them work by themselves. Teaching about neighbourhood places and giving directions using a real map of the town the students live in suggested that the students and the teacher were working towards real communicative tasks that would eventually lead students to become more autonomous individuals in their lives. However, there was no evidence of the teacher allowing learners to set their own goals nor allowing learners to propose their own materials and activities to work in the classroom. Besides, alternative tasks to cater for different learning styles were not in evidence during the observations.

b) In regard to *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for developing students' responsibility,* there were many instances observed in which the teacher raised awareness about sharing responsibility for the teaching and learning process that would eventually lead to autonomy. For instance, when one of the students arrived late and interrupted the class, the teacher kindly advised the latecomer on making an effort to be punctual so as not to miss class time. It was also observed that the teacher, in an effort to make students develop a responsible attitude, suggested at the end of the lesson to take home whatever they wanted to revise in case they had free time. Encouraging learners to seize learning opportunities outside the educational facility was also seen when the teacher suggested using the public library if they needed a space to work or a computer with internet access. Promoting the use of the public library may denote that the teacher was concerned about developing habits for research as well as promoting the use of self-access centers. It seems relevant to mention that the teacher of this group was not observed delegating any tasks or decisions to the learner nor was she seen sharing short or long term objectives.

c) The findings after observing *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for monitoring and assessing students' progress* revealed that the teacher monitored students'

work and provided them with assistance and positive feedback constantly. It was evident by the look on the students' faces that they feared making mistakes and needed help to complete their tasks. Students seemed to have a hard time to complete activities by themselves and the teacher was considerate, patient, supportive and encouraging, which could be seen as the first steps for promoting learner/teacher dialogue reflection on language learning. Even though the researcher did not witness any instances of peer-assessment, or students' self-assessment, there were indications that students *did* have tools to keep track on their work in their portfolios.

d) Observations concerning *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which cultural and linguistic diversity were valued and appreciated* did not reveal positive findings due to the fact that none of the following features was visualised during observations: the teacher using culture and linguistic diversity to generate varied tasks; the teacher encouraging the use of L1 as a cognitive and linguistic resource; the teacher showing cultural awareness; the teacher appreciating different cultural practices; teacher promoting pair work or group work; or the teacher giving students optional tasks to cater for the cultural and linguistic diverse classroom.

Group 2

The multicultural and multilingual ESOL class which corresponded to Benchmarks 1-2 was observed for a total of four hours on two different days. There were fourteen adult students in the class and at least three different pairs of students seemed to share linguistic backgrounds. This class seemed to be a very quiet class as well and the lack of communication among the learners was noticeable except for the few pairs of students that

shared a common language. On the plus side, it might be interesting to mention the fact that there were many attempts on the part of the students to participate actively in the lessons in spite of the difficulties.

a) Observations alluding to *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for planning the learning process* revealed that the teacher attempted to create real world communicative tasks, but, in spite of the fact that the teacher tried to explain the role-play activity more than once, the goal was not clear and most of the students struggled to cope with the task. Unfortunately, the teacher probably failed to assess the autonomy profile of the students by expecting them to manage by themselves when they were not ready to do so. As regards using spaces and resources of the institution for the development of autonomy, the teacher prepared a set of activities based on a listening activity they had just worked on and indicated that if they wished to do extra work, the material would be available in the computer room. It might seem relevant to note that during the observations, there was no evidence of the teacher allowing the learners to create their own goals or have a say in setting goals nor was there any indication of the students proposing their own materials and activities to work in the classroom. Besides, there was no indication either of the teacher providing the students with alternative tasks to cater for different learning styles.

b) Observations pertaining to *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for developing students' responsibility* revealed that the teacher, by suggesting the use of the computer room and by preparing activities for the students, made efforts to encourage the use of self-access materials as a way of making students develop a responsible attitude. The teacher was also observed to share clear short and long term objectives for the coming month by writing them on the board, which could be seen as a gesture of raising awareness about sharing responsibility for the teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, the teacher was

not seen encouraging learners to seize learning opportunities outside the educational facility; assigning homework; delegating tasks and decisions; or encouraging learners to become researchers.

c) After observing *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for monitoring and assessing students' progress*, the findings suggested that the teacher failed at monitoring students and at providing feedback twice during the observations. The first time was during a listening activity: as students did not get the answers, she decided to copy them on the board. The second time was during a role-play activity: while students were working, the teacher was sitting at her desk working on something else so she could not see that the students were having difficulties. In spite of the fact that during the observations the teacher was not seen encouraging students to keep track of their work, the researcher witnessed some students attaching their completed worksheets to their portfolios and consulting previous assignments, which may suggest that the learners were familiar with that kind of practice. It is worth mentioning that instances in which the teacher promoted self-assessment; peer-assessment; or learner/teacher dialogue reflection on language learning were not observed.

d) Observations that focused on *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which cultural and linguistic diversity were valued and appreciated* did not appear to reveal relevant findings for the study owing to the fact that none of the following features was perceived during observations: the teacher using culture and linguistic diversity to generate varied tasks; the teacher encouraging the use of L1 as a cognitive and linguistic resource; the teacher showing cultural awareness; the teacher appreciating different cultural practices; teacher promoting pair work or group work; or the teacher giving students optional tasks to cater for the cultural and linguistic diverse classroom.

Group 3

The multicultural and multilingual ESOL class which corresponded to Benchmarks 3-4 was observed for a total of four hours on two different days. There were fifteen adult students in this class and it seemed that there were three groups of students sharing linguistic backgrounds. Most of the students participated actively in the lessons and volunteered contributions repeatedly. They all appeared to be confident and involved in the tasks that the teacher proposed.

a) The results obtained from the observations that aimed at gathering data on *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for planning the learning process* suggested that the teacher succeeded in creating real world communicative tasks. In one of the lessons observed the teacher asked the students to arrange all the desks in a circle and told them about her ideal place to go on vacation in Canada. Students were invited to tell the class about their ideal places to go on vacation in their home countries and all the students were able to complete the task eagerly. The teacher also provided students with alternative tasks to cater for different learning styles by suggesting varied activities to describe their favourite places in written form: students could choose to write an email to a friend, design a poster for the class or propose their own ideas. During the writing activity the students could resort to the computer room if they needed internet information to complete their task, which was a clear indication that the teacher used spaces and resources of the institution for the development of autonomy. There was also evidence that the teacher assessed the autonomy profile of the students since she sat next to the ones that seemed to need her help and let the ones who seemed to manage by themselves to work alone. Yet, the teacher was not seen allowing the students to create their own goals; or have a say in setting goals.

b) The results of the observations on *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for developing students' responsibility* showed that the teacher did not only encourage the use of self-access material during class time by allowing students to use the computer room but she also encouraged them to become researchers. By delegating decisions related to the type of writing activity they students could do, the teacher might have also tried to raise awareness about sharing responsibility for the teaching and learning process. There was also evidence that the teacher insisted on developing a responsible attitude on the students by assigning as homework activities that were not completed in class and by explaining to students the advantages of reaching the objectives of the day. As a way of encouraging students to seize learning opportunities outside the educational facility, she reminded them about the opening hours of the local library in case they needed a computer with internet access.

c) The observations addressed to obtain information related to *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for monitoring and assessing students' progress*, confirmed that the teacher successfully monitored all students in the classroom and provided feedback constantly to the students, which in turn helped to enhance the promotion of learner/teacher dialogue reflection on language learning. However, activities that promoted peer-assessment, self–assessments or encouraged learners to keep track of their work were not seen.

d) The observations directed to collect data about *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which cultural and linguistic diversity were valued and appreciated* revealed that the teacher used the students' cultural backgrounds to generate varied tasks by inviting them to speak and write about their ideal vacation in their home countries. The teacher was flexible and encouraging as regards students choosing how to approach a writing task, which indicated that the teacher was aware of the need to cater for a cultural and linguistic diverse class. The teacher's

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appreciation towards different cultural practices and diversity was perceived as she attentively listened to everyone as they narrated their ideal places to go on vacation in their homelands. The observation also suggested that the teacher also showed a certain degree of cultural awareness while interacting with the students. Undoubtedly, the seating arrangement of the classroom favoured interaction and promoted group work. It seems relevant to point out that the use of L1 was not encouraged as cognitive and linguistic resource.

Group 4

The multicultural and multilingual ESOL class which corresponded to Benchmarks 5+ was observed for a total of four hours on two different days. There were 12 adult students in this class and it appeared that there were at least two pairs of students sharing linguistic backgrounds. This was a lively class in which most of the students participated actively and gladly in the activities proposed by the teacher.

a) The data collected during the observations pertaining to *the teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for planning learning process* revealed that the teacher proposed communicative tasks that resembled real world scenarios when she directed the learners to create a dialogue between two of the characters from the book they had just finished reading. While the students were working in pairs, the teacher proved to be aware of the learners' autonomy profile as she provided more assistance to the ones that seemed to be having difficulties. Concerning the use of spaces and resources of the institution for the development of autonomy, the teacher suggested that copies of the film based on the novel they had read would be available for the students to take home or to be watched in the computer room of the center. Nevertheless, the findings did not reveal positive results in the

following areas of observation: the teacher allowing learners to create their own goal or have a say in setting goals; allowing students to propose their own materials and activities to work in the classroom; or providing students with alternative tasks to cater for different learning styles.

b) The results obtained from the observation *on teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for developing students' responsibility* confirmed that the teacher was aware of the importance making students develop responsible attitudes. Though the reading was done during class time, there were two students who had missed lessons and could not work on the suggested activity based on the novel. The teacher was observed approaching those two students individually and talking with them for a while. At the end of the class, the teacher suggested that students should contact her directly when they missed lessons if they wanted to receive an update of what had been done on that day, which indicated that the teacher insisted on raising awareness about sharing responsibility for the teaching and learning process. Also, at the end of the class, she shared with the students the objectives for the following day, proving again that she tried to make them participate in their own learning process. Nevertheless, the teacher was not seen delegating tasks and decisions; encouraging learners to seize learning opportunities outside the educational facility; nor was she seen encouraging learners to become researchers.

c) As regards the information collected about *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for monitoring and assessing students' progress*, the results indicated that the teacher monitored and provided feedback when she considered it necessary and she successfully promoted peer assessment when she proposed to the class to rehearse the role play in front of peers before performing in front of the class. The peers used a short and simple checklist to assess their partners during the performance. This peer assessment task

also helped to promote learner/learner dialogue and reflection on language learning. After all the students acted out their conversation, the teacher provided general feedback without personalising any of her comments. It seems relevant to mention that during these observations the teacher was not seen creating or proposing self-assessment tasks nor was she seen encouraging students to keep track of their work.

d) The results obtained from the observations concerning *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which cultural and linguistic diversity were valued and appreciated* showed that the teacher promoted pair and group work. However, the teacher consciously discouraged the use of L1 as a cognitive and linguistic resource by discouraging students from pairing with a partner of the same linguistic background. Additionally, the following areas of interest were not perceived during observations: the teacher using culture and linguistic diversity to generate varied tasks; the teacher showing cultural awareness; the teacher appreciating different cultural practices; or the teacher giving students optional tasks to cater for the cultural and linguistic diverse classroom.

4.3 Teachers' interviews

Three teacher interviews, which consisted of twelve questions (See Appendix 3), were held with the purpose of collecting data on different teachers' strategies and techniques for the development of autonomy that ESOL teachers implemented in the multilingual and multicultural classroom in order to triangulate the data with the information gathered from the classroom observation and the teachers' questionnaires. The teachers observed will be referred as Teacher 1, Teacher 2 and Teacher 3. The questionnaire was divided into five main focus areas of interest:

A) Questions 1 and 2

The first teacher interview was informally conducted and consisted of questions 1 and 2 aimed at learning about the general background of the LINC program. These questions were only responded by one participant.

On the first visit to one of the Multicultural Centers Teacher 1 explained that to be admitted to the program the only requirement was to be an adult immigrant. She added that there was a coordinator in charge of interviewing and assessing students so that they could be placed in the corresponding class according to his/ her level of English.

As regards how the LINC program was structured Teacher 1 responded that the LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) program was divided into three stages: CLB 1-4, CLB 4-8 and CBL 9-12. She explained that the Government of Canada sent portfolios to all the students participating in the program at no cost and that students did not need to buy anything at all. Teacher 1 also indicated that the purpose of the portfolio was mainly for the students to be able to continue their ESOL courses anywhere in Canada if they moved, something that happened very often with just landed immigrants.

B) Questions 3 to 5

Question 3 to 5 intended to obtain data pertaining *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for planning the learning process.*

In question 3, teachers were asked whether they participated in the curriculum design or not. Teachers 1, 2 and 3 responded similarly: none of them had any saying in the design of the curriculum since it had been designed by the Government of Canada. All the teachers highlighted the fact that they followed the guidelines suggested in the CLB program and that

all students used the portfolios which contained all the contents expected to be studied and all the varied competences expected to be developed at each of the stages.

Question 4, when teachers were asked if the current curriculum allowed for modifications, received varied answers. Teacher 1 stated that the curriculum seemed to allow for modifications in that they were free to add any material they wanted to as long as they worked on the set goals, nevertheless she added that implementation of the program was very strictly monitored and supervised by authorities and the suggested guidelines had to be followed. Teacher 2 replied that the curriculum did not allow for modifications and explained that they constantly received support and training on how to implement the program. Teacher 3, however, replied that even though the curriculum did not allow for modifications, it proposed many varied ways to reach the same objectives so she felt it would be unfair to say that the curriculum did not allow for modifications.

To question 5, which aimed at finding out in which situations students contributed actively to help the teachers plan the lessons, Teacher 1 expressed that her class was not able to do so since the students were just learning how to read and write in English. Teacher 2 replied that students usually helped her with topic ideas on the things they needed to learn, for instance if someone needed to take a driving test soon she would plan the lesson with that need in mind. Teacher 3 reported that some of the students in her class were always willing to propose things to do and she always made the effort to squeeze what they suggested into her planning.

C) Questions 6 and 7

Question 6 and 7 had the objective of obtaining information about *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for developing students' responsibility.*

In question 6, the participants were inquired about what they did to encourage students to develop responsible attitudes. Teacher 1 responded that she usually tried to encourage learners to be punctual and come to class regularly. She also explained that students were offered classes mornings and afternoons but they felt full immersion was too much for them and they only attended mornings. She added that, for that reason, it was important for them not miss lessons. Teacher 2 answered that she usually talked to her students about the importance of understanding that attending lessons was essential to make progress and in spite of the fact that students were very different she assured that most of them tried really hard. Teacher 3 replied that she talked to them a lot about being responsible learners and about the fact that she could not help them to learn English if they did not come to class. She also mentioned the fact that as learners did not have a timeline to complete the levels, she usually attempted to agree on a deadline for certain tasks so that they made commitments. Curiously, the three teachers associated the development of responsible attitudes with regular attendance.

In question 7 teachers were asked about how beneficial they thought homework was to develop responsibility in their students. In spite of the fact that the three teachers agreed that homework was essential to develop responsible behaviours, they admitted not assigning homework to the students at all or doing it rarely due to the fact that students hardly ever completed it. Teacher 1 added that she stopped assigning homework because she could not count on everybody to do it and then she needed to use class time for the ones who had not done it and that was unfair for the ones who had been responsible. Teachers 2 and 3 seemed to agree on the fact that when students went home they usually faced housing or

unemployment issues they had to solve and homework would add an unnecessary load of stress.

D) Questions 8 and 9

Questions 8 and 9 intended to learn about the *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for monitoring and assessing students' progress.*

In question 8, when participants were asked how students were able to monitor and assess their own work, Teacher 1 responded that students use their portfolios to monitor and assess their work. She detailed that the portfolio contained a lot of material and activities with module checklists for them to know not only of what was expected from them but portfolios were also useful to know what they had already accomplished. Teacher 2 also mentioned the portfolio as the provider of all resources for monitoring and assessing students' work and also commented on how beneficial portfolios were for learners since they contained a lot of information. Teacher 3, on the contrary, mentioned that the portfolio provided 'some' tools for monitoring and assessing students' work but that they were not enough. She then continued to explain that the new program they were about to implement was called PBLA (Portfolio Based Language Assessment), and that that program was supposed to cover certain areas of assessment that were missing in the current program and aimed at implementing a standardized in-class assessment protocol.

Question 9 asked the teachers about the different tools they used to assess students' progress and the responses were the following: Teachers 1 mentioned that she designed her assessment sheets regularly as a form of continuous assessment on the different competences determined for each of the levels. Teacher 2 and 3 coincided on the fact that, assessment of

competences, which occurred daily, together with assessing the activities provided in the portfolio constituted the main tools for assessing students' progress.

E) Questions 10 to 12

Questions 10 to 12 had the purpose of obtaining information pertaining *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which cultural and linguistic diversity were value and appreciated.*

In question 10 the teachers were inquired about the different ways in which they used the cultural diversity that multicultural classes offered to plan their lessons. Teacher 1 replied that cultural diversity enriched her lessons immensely; however, she regretted not allotting more time to learn about her students' cultures by arguing that teachers needed to focus on learning about the Canadian culture. In spite of the restrictions imposed by the program, she stated that she made efforts to frequently plan activities for which they used their cultural backgrounds. Teacher 2 considered cultural diversity as the best environment to learn about the world without travelling and said that she always planned activities for sharing different cultural values, traditions and customs. Teacher 3 highlighted that she normally included in her planning various tasks that favoured learning about cultural differences as a way to promote cultural integration and acceptance, which were values of the Canadian multicultural society.

In question 11 the participants were asked about their opinion of the use of student's L 1 in the classroom and they were also questioned about the reasons why they believed its use should be supported or not. Teachers 1, 2 and 3 agreed on the fact that the use of L1 was allowed but it was not a practice that they encouraged. Teacher 1 responded that some

classes had more languages in common than others and students usually tended to sit together when they shared the language. The teacher believed that this situation did not favour the need for using English in class and often suggested, when working in pairs, that learners should pair with peers who spoke a different language of their own. Teacher 2 expressed not to be too concerned about the fact that students used L1 since, she assured, that living in Canada provided students with plenty of opportunities to use English and that students would use English when they were ready to do so. Teacher 3 said she supported the use of L1 for translation purposes, she thought it was necessary for learners to find the right meaning of words and insisted on students using bilingual dictionaries. On the other hand, she expressed her preference for the use of English during oral tasks or discussions.

Question 12 intended to enquire about the possible difficulties that multilingual classes present. Teacher 1 emphasized the fact that overcoming frustration was probably one of the main difficulties that a multilingual class presented. Then, she commented that learning a new language could be very frustrating in the early stages for both the teachers and the students because even though students made huge progress, students could still not communicate with peers for a while. Teacher 2 mentioned that the lack of a common language in the classroom could make communication very difficult and added that she constantly needed to find multiple ways to get her messages across. Teacher 3 expressed that in multilingual classrooms it was very difficult for students to socialise and that was probably the major difficulty that immigrants encountered; their inability to make friends due to language barriers.

4.4 Data triangulation

The present section purports to cross-examine the results obtained from the self-completion questionnaires for the teachers, the direct classroom observations and the informal and semi-structured interviews with the teachers.   For the purpose of facilitating the analysis, the following charts display summaries of the major findings obtained from the three different methods used to collect data:

Table 1: Summary of teachers' self-completion questionnaires

Teacher's Strategies and techniques implemented by the for the development of learner autonomy	Findings
Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for PLANNING the learning process Questions 1 to 5	- More than half of the teachers surveyed stated that they 'sometimes' use student's needs assessment when they plan their lessons while a smaller group responded that they 'usually' do it. - The majority of the teachers revealed that their students are 'usually' or 'always' invited to contribute to planning lessons. - Most of the teachers answered that they have a flexible curriculum to follow. - As regards determining the objectives of the course, the

	'institution' ranks first, the 'teachers' rank second and the 'learners' rank last.
	• The data collected also indicate that the institution and the teacher are the providers of learning resources while the learners have no participation at all in the selection process.
Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for developing students' RESPONSIILITY Questions 6 to 10	• The results of the questionnaire show that all the teachers 'sometimes' organise activities outside the classroom setting. • The teachers revealed that they 'never' or 'sometimes' negotiate short and long term goals with the students. • The answers obtained show that the students 'never' or 'sometimes' use internet in class to do research. • The teachers surveyed responded that they 'never' or sometimes' let their students propose their own tasks in class. • The teachers' answers show that only a small percentage of them assign homework to students while the great majority 'never' do it or 'sometimes' do it.
Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for MONITORING and ASSESSING students' progress, Questions 11 to 15	• Most of the teachers responded that the teachers and the students could regularly monitor the students' work by providing the student with self-assessment tools such as questionnaires, checklists or charts. • The replies obtained from the teachers seem to indicate that the majority of the teachers do not encourage their students to take self-assessment tests.

	• The great majority of teachers revealed that they 'sometimes' promote peer assessment in class. • All the teachers responded that they usually have teacher/student interviews to discuss students' progress. • The majority of the teachers interviewed responded that formal summative evaluation takes place when the student and the teacher agree that the student is ready and a minority group responded that that decision is made by the teacher.
Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which CULTURAL and LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY are valued and appreciated Question 16 to 20	• The results of the questionnaire show that all the teachers 'sometimes' give their students alternative tasks during class time. • The teachers replied that the majority of the students 'sometimes' work in pairs or in groups whereas a smaller group 'usually' do it. • Most of the teachers perceive teaching a cultural diverse class as 'challenging' while a smaller group consider it 'easy'. • From the teachers' responses, it can be seen that the majority of the teachers believe teaching a class with linguistic background differences make their classes 'challenging' while other smaller groups believe linguistic background differences make their lessons either demanding or difficult.

Teacher's Strategies and techniques implemented by the teachers for the development of learner autonomy:

Table 2: Summary of direct classroom observations

Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for **PLANNING the learning process**	*Group 1*	*Group 2*	*Group 3*	*Group 4*
➢ Uses spaces and resources of the institution for the development of autonomy.	✓	✓	✓	✓
➢ Assesses the autonomy profile of the students.	✓	*X*	✓	✓
➢ Allows learners to create their own goals or allows students to have a say in setting goals.	*X*	*X*	*X*	*X*
➢ Allows students to propose their own materials and activities to work in the classroom.	*X*	*X*	*X*	*X*
➢ Provides students with alternative tasks to cater for different learning styles.	*X*	*X*	✓	*X*
➢ Creates real world communicative tasks.	✓	*X*	✓	✓
Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for **developing students' RESPONSIILITY**	*Group 1*	*Group 2*	*Group 3*	*Group 4*
➢ Raises awareness about sharing responsibility for the teaching and learning process.	✓	✓	✓	✓
➢ Encourages the use of self-access materials.	✓	✓	✓	*X*
➢ Encourages learners to seize learning	✓	*X*	✓	*X*

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
opportunities outside the educational facility.				
➢ Assigns homework.	✓	X	✓	X
➢ Delegates tasks and decisions.	X	X	✓	X
➢ Shares clear short and long term objectives.	X	✓	✓	✓
➢ Makes students develop a responsible attitude.	✓	✓	✓	✓
➢ Encourages learners to become researchers.	✓	X	✓	X
Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for MONITORING and ASSESSING students' progress	*Group 1*	*Group 2*	*Group 3*	*Group 4*
➢ Provides feedback constantly.	✓	X	✓	✓
➢ Promotes peer-assessment.	X	X	X	✓
➢ Creates or proposes self- assessments tasks.	X	X	X	X
➢ Encourages students to keep track of their work.	✓	✓	X	X
➢ Promotes learner/teacher dialogue reflection on language learning.	✓	X	✓	✓
Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which CULTURAL and LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY are valued and appreciated	*Group 1*	*Group 2*	*Group 3*	*Group 4*
➢ Uses culture and linguistic diversity as an asset to generate varied tasks.	X	X	✓	X
➢ Encourages the use of L1 as a cognitive and	X	X	X	X

linguistic resource.				
➢ Shows cross cultural awareness.	*X*	*X*	✓	✓
➢ Appreciates different cultural practices.	*X*	*X*	✓	✓
➢ Gives students optional tasks to cater for the cultural and linguistic diverse classroom.	*X*	*X*	✓	✓
➢ Promotes pair work or group work.	*X*	*X*	✓	✓

Table 3: Summary of teachers' interviews

Teacher's Strategies and techniques implemented for the development of learner autonomy	Findings
Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for PLANNING the learning process, Questions 3 to 5	• All the teachers interviewed revealed that they do not participate in curriculum design proposed by the Government of Canada. • All the teachers seemed to agree on the fact that that the curriculum does not allow for modifications. • As regards students' participation in lesson planning, it might be inferred from all the teachers' comments that the students do not contribute actively in that process.
Teachers' strategies and	• All the teachers suggested that they usually discuss with

techniques implemented for developing students' RESPONSIILITY, Questions 6 and 7	the students issues related to developing responsible attitudes and they all mentioned encouraging learners to attend classes regularly. • All the teachers believed homework to be beneficial to develop learners' responsible attitudes. However, all the teacher admitted not assigning it regularly or assigning it rarely.
Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for MONITORING and ASSESSING students' progress, Questions 8 and 9	• The data collected from the teachers interviews also revealed that the portfolios provide the students with (some) tools to monitor and assess their own work. • All the teachers mentioned that the assessment of competences constitutes the most salient tool for assessing students' progress.
Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which CULTURAL and LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY are valued and appreciated, Question 10 to 12	• As regards the different ways in which the teachers used the cultural diversity that multicultural classes offered to plan their lessons, all the teachers highlighted the advantages of teaching in such environment. Nevertheless, one of the teachers pointed out that the program focuses on learning about the Canadian culture. • The information gathered pertaining teachers' opinion of the use of student's L1 in the classroom showed that all the teachers agreed that even though the use of L1 is not discouraged, it is not supported either.

	• The teachers reported that the problems that multilingual classes faced were: students' overcoming frustration and lack of communication in the early stages as well as student's incapability to socialize due to language barriers.

Triangulation of the findings regarding teacher's strategies and techniques implemented for the development of learner autonomy is approached under four broad categories:

A) Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for planning the learning process

From the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire and interviews, it could be inferred that, in spite of the fact the teachers perceive the curriculum as a flexible one; the institutions are in total control of monitoring the implementation of the unmodifiable curriculum designed by the Government of Canada. The data collected from the teachers' questionnaires and interviews also indicate that the institutions share with the teachers the control of determining the objectives of the course and providing the classroom resources. The results from the observation match the previous findings as all the teachers and students were seen using only resources and materials provided by either the institution or the teacher. It is worth mentioning though, that the resources and materials offered by the institution or the teacher were varied and all the teachers made efforts to invite students to use all the available resources.

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The information gathered from the teachers' questionnaires also shows that the teachers do not use the students' needs assessment on a regular basis. This might indicate that the planning might not always respond to the learners' needs. However, the results of the questionnaires show that the majority of the teachers revealed that their students are 'usually' or 'always' invited to contribute to planning lessons. When analysing teachers' responses in detail as regards students' participation in lesson planning, it might be inferred that, even though the students might contribute with ideas or topics for the teachers' to create real world communicative tasks, they are not active participants of the lesson planning. This stands in accord with the data obtained from the classroom observations as none of the teachers was seen allowing learners to create their own goals or allowing students to have a say in setting goals nor were the teachers observed allowing students to propose their own materials and activities to work in the classroom. The observations might also suggest that very few of the teachers provided students with alternative tasks to cater for different learning styles. Nevertheless, most of the teachers were able to assess the autonomy profile of the students, and assisted them accordingly.

B) Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for developing students' responsibility

Both results obtained from the teachers' interviews and the observations suggest that all the teachers usually discuss with the students issues related to developing responsible attitudes by raising awareness about sharing responsibility for the teaching and learning process and by mainly encouraging learners to attend classes regularly.

The data obtained from the teachers' questionnaire revealed that organizing activities outside the classroom setting or assigning homework, in spite of their benefits, are not common practices. In contrast to this, the results obtained from the observations strongly suggest that most of the teachers encourage the optional use of self-access materials and half of the teachers encourage learners to seize learning opportunities outside the educational facility; which might indicate that the teachers are aware of the advantages of fostering autonomous behaviours.

In spite of the fact that he information obtained from the teachers' questionnaires revealed that the majority of the teachers 'sometimes' or 'never' negotiate short and long term goals with the students, from the observations it could be inferred that the majority of the teachers shared and reached a compromise with the students as regards clear short and long term objectives.

Classroom observations proved that the use of self-access resources, including internet, was often encouraged but it was not often put into practice during class hours. The answers obtained from the teachers' questionnaire concur with the data collected during classroom observations since the responses indicate that the students 'never' or 'sometimes' use internet in class to do research.

As regards the role of the teacher in the classroom, teachers' replies and classroom observations revealed that the teachers do not let their students propose their own tasks and that the teachers rarely delegate tasks or decisions.

C) Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for monitoring and assessing students' progress

The information collected from the teachers' questionnaires and interviews suggests that most of the teachers and the students could regularly monitor the students' work by providing the student with assessment tools such as questionnaires, checklists or charts provided by the institution in the portfolios. This stands in accord with the data obtained from the classroom observations due to the fact that the teachers were frequently observed encouraging students to keep track of their work in their portfolios. In contrast to this, the data gathered from the teachers' questionnaires, the interviews and classroom observations seem to indicate the teachers do not often create or propose self-assessment tasks or tests nor do regularly promote peer assessment in class.

The information gathered from the teachers' questionnaires, the teachers' interviews and the classroom observations appear to agree on the fact that teacher/student interviews to discuss students' progress, to provide feedback and to reflect on language learning are common practices. This correlates with the information collected during teachers' interviews in which the majority of the teachers responded that formal summative evaluation of the different competences takes place when the student and the teacher agree that the student is ready to be evaluated.

D) Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which CULTURAL and LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY are valued and appreciated

In spite of the fact that the information collected from the teachers' questionnaires reveal that all the teachers highlighted the advantages of teaching in a cultural and linguistic diverse environment, the results of the teachers' questionnaire , teachers' interviews and classroom observations also show that giving student alternative tasks during class time that would address this diversity is uncommon. Interestingly, it appears necessary to mention that one of the teachers pointed out that the program focuses on learning about "the Canadian culture".

The data collected from the teachers' questionnaires, the teachers' interviews and the classroom observations denote that pair work or group work are not common practices in beginner or intermediate courses but are more frequent in advanced courses. Still, it might be worth noticing that, for most of the teachers, teaching a cultural diverse class can be 'challenging', 'demanding' or 'difficult' due to the lack of communication that the students face mainly in the early stages.

Although during classroom observations some teachers showed cultural awareness and were appreciative of the different cultural practices, the information collected pertaining teachers' views of the use of student's L1 in the classroom showed that all the teachers agreed that even though the use of L1 is not discouraged, it is not supported either. These results match the results obtained from the classroom observations since none of the teachers was observed encouraging the use of L1 as a cognitive and linguistic resource.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND AFTERTHOUGHTS

The overall content of this study aimed to advance an understanding of the strategies and techniques that ESOL teachers implemented to promote the development of learner autonomy in the multilingual and multicultural ESOL classroom. Specifically, the study focused on teaching conducted in Multicultural Centers in the province of Ontario, Canada. The research explored and identified various ESOL teaching strategies and techniques, evaluated and analyzed them critically and determined, as stated in the research question, if ESOL teachers in the selected Multicultural Centers in the province of Ontario, Canada, implemented teaching strategies and techniques that effectively developed learner's autonomy.

The literature review suggested that since the 1950s a substantial body of research has been carried out in relation to a more learner-centered approach to teaching, a theoretical approach which has had a considerable influence on the concept of learner autonomy. Holec's (1981) definition of learner autonomy triggered an immediate response in the educational community and permitted the concept of learner autonomy to be explored by many and from many different dimensions. Even though there is no agreement on one definition of learner autonomy that comprises all the aspects involved in autonomous learning, educators seem to agree on the importance of working towards the promotion of learner autonomy in all its possible dimensions as an integral component of language teaching practices. Harmer (2007) acknowledges the difficulties that educators face and explains that attitudes towards autonomous learning are frequently conditioned by the educational culture in which the students have studied or are studying: autonomy of action is not always considered a

desirable characteristic in such contexts and teachers may encounter either passive or active resistance if they attempt to impose autonomous learning inappropriately. This small-scale study has aimed to advance our understanding of the difficulties and limitations faced by educators in Multicultural Centers in the province of Ontario, Canada, in fostering learner autonomy and the extent to which they succeed in implementing effective strategies in this regard.

The main challenge that the researcher encountered in the process of data collection was the difficulty in being allowed access to educational facilities. Since the methodology implemented for the field-study consisted of collecting data through direct classroom observations, self-completion questionnaires for the teachers and informal and semi-structured interviewing with the teachers, it was imperative that the researcher was granted permission to enter any available educational facility in which ESOL was taught. It might be relevant to point out that even though permission was granted to observe classes in the above-mentioned Multicultural centre, not all the teachers were willing to welcome the researcher into the classroom on the grounds that having strangers observing could cause disruptions in the normal flow of the lessons.

It is worth mentioning that definite and generalised conclusions cannot be drawn from the present study given the comparatively limited sample of the population observed. The number of teachers selected was of course very limited and their replies should under no circumstances represent the vision of all ESOL teachers practising in in Multicultural Centers in the province of Ontario, Canada. It should also be noted that even though the survey was supported by follow-up teacher's interviews and classroom observations, the

present study relied mainly on the teacher's perceptions which, as a result, limit the validity of the conclusions of the study.

Based on the analysis of the different data collection methods through self-completion questionnaires for the teachers, direct classroom observations, and informal and semi-structured interviewing with the teachers, the findings of this investigation seem to indicate that ESOL teachers in Multicultural Centers in Ontario, Canada, partially implement teaching strategies and techniques that effectively develop learner's autonomy: It can be concluded that the extent to which autonomy was fostered effectively was mainly dependable on various factors, namely; the philosophy of the institution, the cultural context in which learning took place, the cultural background of the learner, the degree of autonomy of the learners and the role of the teacher within the autonomous classroom.

In the light of the results reported in the previous section, the first hypothesis derived from the research question which argues that ESOL teachers in the multilingual and multicultural classroom are often unable to implement effective strategies and techniques to promote learner's autonomy can be presumed right in the following cases:

After analysing the data collected from the teachers' questionnaires, teacher's interviews and classroom observations pertaining to the *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for planning the learning process*, it can be concluded that in spite of the fact that 80% of the teachers responded that the curriculum designed by the Government of Canada was flexible, when participants were asked to identify who determined the objective of the course, the results show that the teachers had a minor participation whereas the learners had little or no participation in determining course goals. Besides, teachers' interviews specified that each student was given a portfolio with all the materials and contents to be studied and that the

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implementation of the program was strictly supervised by the authorities. Even though some of the teachers commented that they had the freedom to attach or use material from other sources, it was clear that the objectives of the course were not in the hands of the learners. This contradicts Nunan's (1995, as cited in Reinders 2010) and Cotterall's (2000) recommendation to educators to allow students to create their own goals as a way to move along the continuum from dependence to autonomy and asserts Reinders' (2010) belief that many learners are unlikely to take control over decisions about what to learn and how, which makes the implementation of pedagogy for developing learner autonomy difficult. However, it seems relevant to mention that the students attending the multicultural centers are just landed immigrants who most likely pursue a common goal: the need to develop language skills for social, cultural and economic integration into the Canadian society.

Nunan (2003) and Espinosa (2015) encourage course designers for autonomous classrooms to allow for teacher and students to make negotiations as regards the contents of the course and allow learners to propose their own materials in the classroom. Nevertheless, the data collected revealed that the learners were not active participants in the selection process of the learning resources since 60% of the teachers agreed that the institutions and the teachers were the providers of the learning resources and 40% believed that the institution was the provider. It seems relevant to point out that the learner as an option in the questionnaire was not chosen by any of the participants.

The second hypothesis derived from the research question which states that ESOL teachers find it difficult to implement effective teaching strategies and techniques to promote learner's autonomy in the multilingual and multicultural classroom can be proved right in the following instances:

As regards the *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for planning the learning process*, the information gathered shows that the teachers did not use students' needs assessment to plan their lessons on a regular basis since 60% of the teachers surveyed responded that they 'sometimes' used it whereas 40% of them 'usually' did. Hence, planning might have not always responded to the learners' needs. Interestingly, Espinosa's guide (2015) highlights the importance of a student needs-analysis as a necessary tool to constitute the foundations for learners to set their own goals and as a tool to create good habits that will eventually result in autonomous behaviors. The fact that the teachers have the course already designed by the institution might make it difficult for them to put into practice the information gathered from such analysis.

The data collected as regards *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for developing students' responsibility* indicate that assigning homework as a way of promoting autonomous behaviours was rarely promoted: 40% of the participants responded that they 'never' assigned homework, another 40% responded that they 'sometimes' did, and only 20% answered that they 'usually' did. The truth is that most of the teachers expressed their frustrations for the difficulties that students had in completing homework by themselves or outside class hours. Not obtaining positive results probably had to do, as one of the teachers mentioned, with the fact that adult learners had to face housing or unemployment issues when they got home and, therefore, assigning homework would add an unnecessary load of stress.

As regards the use of self-access resources such as libraries and computers with internet access that, according to Espinosa (2015), can serve as resources that would lead learners towards autonomous behaviours, the results obtained indicate that 80% of the teachers

responded that students 'sometimes' used internet in class to do research and 20% indicated that students 'never' used internet in the classroom. It is worth noticing that most of the teachers were observed persistently encouraging the optional use of self-access resources in the institution or in the local library as a way to encourage students to become responsible researchers. Nevertheless, students seemed to rely on the teacher and on their course materials to complete their tasks.

Teachers' replies and classroom observations pertaining to the role of the teacher in the classroom revealed that 80% of the teachers 'sometimes' let their students propose their own tasks and 20% responded that they 'never' did it. From these results, it can be inferred that the teachers rarely delegated tasks or decisions. On this subject, Scharle and Szabó (2000) highlight the importance of delegating tasks and decisions since when students make decisions they feel empowered that they have control or ownership over their own learning.

The information collected from the teachers' questionnaires, the teacher's interviews and the classroom observations as regards *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for monitoring and assessing students' progress* reflects that peer assessment was not a regular practice since 80% of the teachers replied that they 'sometimes' put it into practice while 20% stated that they 'usually' did it. However, direct classroom observations showed that this practice was not implemented in the beginner or intermediate classes but it was successfully implemented in the more advanced groups. This might be an indication that the higher the level of the target language of the students, the easier for them to assume the teacher's role to evaluate their peers.

When analysing *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which cultural and linguistic diversity* are valued and

appreciated the respondents highlighted the advantages of teaching in a cultural and linguistic diverse environment and none of them perceived teaching a cultural diverse class as either 'difficult' or 'demanding'. 40% of the answers collected described the teaching practices of a cultural diverse class as 'easy' whereas 60% of them view their practices as 'challenging'. Nevertheless, teacher's perception pertaining to teaching a class with dissimilar linguistic backgrounds show that 60% of the participants view teaching a class with linguistic background differences 'challenging', 20% of them find it 'difficult' and another 20% find it 'demanding'. Evidence suggests that lack of communication in the target language that the students face mainly in the early stages of the learning process make the academic and social integration of students into their environments a slow-paced experience. For instance, one out of the four groups observed was unable to communicate amongst themselves or with the teacher due to different linguistic backgrounds. The teachers also reported that language barriers in multilingual classes make it very difficult for students to overcome frustration.

In respect to the teachers offering students alternative tasks to cater for cultural and/or linguistic diversity, the data collected shows that 100% of the teachers 'sometimes' did it. Also, classroom observations indicate that only the advanced groups were given a more varied array of tasks to choose from and that the teachers used the students' cultural backgrounds to generate some of the tasks. When the teachers were asked about their own perception on his/her cultural competence 100% of them replied they were familiar with 'some' of the cultural backgrounds of the students that they were teaching at that moment. It might be inferred that the participants of the study faced certain limitations as regards being culturally competent due to the various cultures and different languages that coexisted in each of the classrooms. It is worth mentioning that Harmer (2007), Coelho (2012) and

Serpil (2016) consider teacher training in ways to address diversity in the multicultural and multilingual classroom as central for successful language learning.

When it comes to the information collected pertaining teachers' views of the use of student's L1 in the classroom it can be inferred that all the teachers agreed that even though the use of L1 is not discouraged, it is not supported either. Although during classroom observations some teachers showed cultural awareness and were appreciative of the different cultural practices, as one of the teachers pointed out, the program focused on learning about "the Canadian culture". The researcher observed one of the teachers discouraging the use of L1 as a cognitive and linguistic resource by inviting students to pair with a partner of different linguistic background. Nonetheless, Cummins (2007) believes that when students' L1 is invoked as a cognitive and linguistic resource, it can function as a stepping stone to scaffold more accomplished performance in the L2. Besides, L1 is an important component of personal and cultural identity, as such; its use should be encouraged by creating educational environments that celebrate language diversity (Coelho, 2012).

The third hypothesis which stated that ESOL teachers are not fully aware of effective teaching strategies and techniques that can be implemented in the multilingual and multicultural classroom to promote learner's autonomy was proved wrong since there were many indications of the teachers being aware of many teaching strategies and techniques to move learners towards autonomy:

After analysing the data collected from the teachers' questionnaires, teacher's interviews and classroom observations pertaining to the teachers' *strategies and techniques implemented for planning the learning process*, it can be concluded that most of the teachers usually invited students to contribute to the lessons with their own topics or ideas as proposed by Espinosa

(2015). The data obtained indicates that 40% of the teachers 'always' invited students to contribute to designing their lesson planning, another 40% 'usually' did it and only a 20% of the teachers questioned responded that they 'sometimes' invited students to contribute to planning lessons.

Although the information collected suggests that very few of the teachers provided students with alternative tasks to cater for different learning styles, with reference to the role of the teacher in assessing the autonomy profile of the students, most of the teachers were able to determine the level of autonomy of their learners, which Espinosa (2015) considers as an essential component in the autonomous classroom. This implies that the majority of the teachers were aware of their students' study habits and the conceptions of their own students as regards students' and teachers' roles.   Most of the teachers were observed providing assistance to students as needed; otherwise, teachers let them work by themselves.

In spite of the fact that teacher interviews revealed that organizing activities outside the classroom setting was not a common practice since 100% of the teacher responded that they 'sometimes' did it, the information collected reveals that all the teachers proposed communicative tasks that resembled real world scenarios which would eventually lead students to become more autonomous individuals in their lives. In consonance with Cotterall (2000), course tasks should either replicate real-world communicative tasks or provide rehearsal for such tasks.

The results obtained as regards *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for developing students' responsibility* revealed that teachers were well aware of the advantages of fostering autonomous behaviours in their students. In the view of Scharle and Szabó (2000), responsible learners are the ones who: accept the idea that their own efforts are

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Profesora Sandra Sawchuk - Buenos Aires, Cohort 11 - 2021

crucial to progress in learning and behave accordingly; consciously monitor their own progress; and make an effort to use available opportunities to their benefit. The results obtained from the three different methods of data collection strongly suggest that the teachers usually discussed with the students issues related to developing responsible attitudes such as making the effort of attending classes regularly, completing all tasks, arriving on time, taking advantage of all the resources available or catching up on missed lessons.

The researcher observed that majority of the teachers shared and reached a compromise with the students as regards clear short and long term objectives. Interestingly, the information obtained from the teachers' questionnaires revealed the opposite: 60% of the teachers responded they 'sometimes' did it and 40% answered they 'never' negotiated short and long term goals. Scharle and Szabó (2000) claim that by sharing clear short and long term objectives with the students, teachers give students the opportunity to feel identified with the aims; and as a result, the learners feel more responsible for the outcome.

The information collected from the *teachers' questionnaires*, the *teacher's interviews and the classroom observations as regards teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for monitoring and assessing students' progress* suggests that 60% of the teachers and the students regularly monitored the students' work by using assessment and self-assessment tools provided by the institution. 40% of the teachers replied that students are encouraged to take self-assessment tools regularly, which, according to Gardner (1999), does not only provide the learner with immediate feedback on achievements to determine language proficiency and to reflect on learning strategies but it also helps to build student confidence by demonstrating learning gain. In the view of Kilner & Drew (2012), incorporating self-assessment in the teaching-learning process might potentially reduce the learner's

dependence on the instructor as well as it might develop the learner's ability to judge the appropriateness and accuracy of their performance.

In connection with formal summative evaluation of the different competences 60% of the teachers indicated that it took place when the student and the teacher agreed that the student was ready to be evaluated while 40 % of the teachers responded that formal summative evaluation took place when the teacher believed the student is ready. None of the participants chose the options which indicated that summative tests took place when the student believed that he/she was ready or when the institution scheduled the evaluation. Taking into account that learners and teachers have the chance of negotiating when this type of tests take place, the results seem to indicate that summative assessments are given as a way of recording skill acquisition and academic achievement.

The information gathered revealed that teacher/student interviews to discuss students' progress, to provide feedback and to reflect on language learning were common practices since 100% of the teachers responded that they 'usually' did it. It is worth mentioning the importance of the teacher/student interviews: as Scharle and Szabó (2000) argue, by creating opportunities for the learners to evaluate themselves, they can discover areas of strengths and weaknesses and plan the directions of progress as well as assume the role of the teacher and objectively judge their own work. It seems relevant to add that during classroom observations most of the teachers were observed providing positive feedback to learners. Most of the teachers were considerate, patient, supportive and encouraging towards the students, which helped to create the right environment to promote learner/teacher dialogue reflection on language learning.

In reference to *teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which cultural and linguistic diversity* are valued and appreciated, the data obtained from the teachers' questionnaires indicate that 40% of the teachers 'usually' planned work in pairs or in groups while 60% admitted that they 'sometimes' propose to implement that practice. Classrooms observations showed that the more advanced groups did not present any difficulties in working in pairs or in groups: a possible indication that the learners had been introduced to autonomous behaviours gradually and they had reached a comfortable level of autonomy which, as Coelho (2012) points out, can be considered as a first step towards the successful integration of students of all backgrounds into the larger society economically, socially, linguistically and culturally, an essential goal of education in multicultural and multilingual communities.

Upon identifying and analysing some teaching strategies and techniques that ESOL teachers implemented to promote the development of learner autonomy in the multilingual and multicultural classroom, it can be concluded that in spite of the obstacles and difficulties that the teachers faced, most of them succeeded in minimizing the challenges presented by diversity and maximized all opportunities to move learners towards autonomous behaviours that allowed them to take control over their learning process.

5.1 Limitations of the present study and suggestions for further research

As it has been mentioned before in this section, one of the shortcomings of the present study is that it relied heavily on a small population sample. In order to make conclusions more valid, conducting this study on a larger population sample might increase the reliability of the conclusions.

Another way to further validate the findings of the present study could be to explore the perception of learners as regards learner autonomy: It would be an interesting line for future research to replicate the field-study in classrooms in which the population to be surveyed was not only teachers but also students.

Last but not least, another line for future exploration could be to analyse the objectives and methodologies of the ESOL curriculum designed by the government of Canada and determine to what extend its design favours or allows the promotion of learner autonomy.

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7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 : QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE TEACHERS

Department of Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa
Universidad Tecnológica Nacional –
Buenos Aires - Argentina
Researcher: Sandra Sawchuk

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this study is to advance an understanding on effective teaching strategies and techniques for the development of learner autonomy in the multilingual and multicultural ESOL classroom.

As a participant, you will be answering a 10 minutes long questionnaire.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information you provide is considered confidential; your name or institution you work for will not be included or, in any other way, associated with the data collected in the study.

Questionnaire for the teachers
If you are teaching more than group, please base your answers on ONE group of your choice. A space is provides in case you wish to clarify your choice.

Number of students in the class: _____   Number of hours of instruction weekly: _____

Level of English:

 a) ESL Literacy   b) Benchmark 1-2   c) Benchmark 3-4   d) Benchmark 5+

Circle the most appropriate option for you.

1) How often do you use your students' need assessment to plan your lessons?

    a) never   b) sometimes   c) usually   d) always

2) How often do you invite your students to contribute to designing your lesson planning?

a) never   b) sometimes   c) usually   d) always

3) I have a flexible curriculum to follow.

   a) True   b) False

4) The objectives of the course are determined by _____

   a) the institution   b) the teacher   c) the learner   d) the institution and the teacher

   e) the teacher and the learner   f) the institution, the teacher and the learner

5) The learning resources used in the classroom are provided by _____

   a) the institution   b) the teacher   c) the learner   d) the institution and the teacher

   e) the teacher and the learner   f) the institution, the teacher and the learner

6) How often do you organize activities outside the classroom setting?

   a) never   b) sometimes   c) usually   d) always

7) How often do you negotiate short and long term goals with your students?

   a) never   b) sometimes   c) usually   d) always

8) How often do your students use the internet to do research in class?

   a) never   b) sometimes   c) usually   d) always

9) How often do you let your students propose their own tasks to work in class?

   a) never   b) sometimes   c) usually   d) always

10) How often do your assign homework (e.g.: worksheets, tasks outside the classroom setting or activities in a self- access center)?

   a) never   b) sometimes   c) usually   d) always

11) Students can regularly monitor their own work by using questionnaires, checklists or charts.

   a) True   b) False

12) Students are encouraged to take self-assessment tests regularly.

   a) True   b) False

13) How often do you promote peer assessment in class?

   a)   never   b) sometimes   c) usually   d) always

14) How often do you hold teacher/student interviews to discuss student's progress?

   a)   never   b) sometimes   c) usually   d) always

15) When do you give your students summative tests (e.g. end of project, end of unit or end of course)?

   a) when the teacher believes the student is ready

   b) when the student believes he/she is ready

   c) when the teacher and the student agree that the students is ready

   d) when the institution schedules the evaluation

16) How often are students given alternative tasks to choose from during class time?

   a) never   b) sometimes   c) usually   d) always

17) How often do your students work in pairs or in groups?

   a) never   b) sometimes   c) usually   d) always

18) Cultural diversity makes my teaching practise _____.

   a) easy   b) challenging   c) difficult d) demanding

19) Linguistic background differences make my teaching practices _____.

   a) easy   b) challenging   c) difficult   d) demanding

20) How familiar are you with the cultural backgrounds of the students that you are teaching at the moment?

a) *I am not familiar with any of them*

b) *I am familiar with some*

c) *I am familiar with most of them*

d) *I am familiar with all of them*

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 2 : DATA COLLECTION SHEET

✓ *Observed*   X   *Not observed*

Observation Time Period: From ..... AM to ..... AM	*Date:*
Level:	*Number of students:*

Strategies and techniques for the development of learner autonomy	**What the teacher does…**
a) Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for PLANNING the learning process	_____ Uses spaces and resources of the institution for the development of autonomy. _____ Assesses the autonomy profile of the students. _____ Allows learners to create their own goals or allows students to have a say in setting goals. _____ Allows students to propose their own materials and activities to work in the classroom. _____ Provides students with alternative tasks to cater for different learning styles. _____ Creates real world communicative tasks.
b) Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for developing students'	_____ Raises awareness about sharing responsibility for the teaching and learning process. _____ Encourages the use of self-access materials.

RESPONSIILITY	_____ Encourages learners to seize learning opportunities outside the educational facility.
	_____ Assigns homework.
	_____ Delegates tasks and decisions.
	_____ Shares clear short and long term objectives.
	_____ Makes students develop a responsible attitude.
	_____ Encourages learners to become researchers.
c) Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for MONITORING and ASSESSING students' progress,	_____ Provides feedback constantly.
	_____ Promotes peer-assessment.
	_____ Creates or proposes self- assessments tasks.
	_____ Encourages students to keep track of their work.
	_____ Promotes learner/teacher dialogue reflection on language learning.
d) Teachers' strategies and techniques implemented for creating an educational environment in which CULTURAL and LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY are valued and	_____ Uses culture and linguistic diversity as an asset to generate varied tasks.
	_____ Encourages the use of L1 as a cognitive and linguistic resource.
	_____ Fosters pair or group work.
	_____ Shows cross cultural awareness.
	_____ Appreciates different cultural practices.
	_____ Gives students optional tasks to cater for the cultural and linguistic diverse classroom.

appreciated.	_____ Promotes pair work or group work

Appendix 3: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE TEACHERS' INTERVIEWS

As regards the general background of the program

---

1) *How are students admitted to the LINC program?*

2) *How is the LINC programme structured?*

As regards PLANNING the learning process

---

3) *Do you participate in the curriculum design?*

4) *Would you say that the curriculum allows for modification?*

5) *In which situations do your students contribute actively to plan lessons?*

As regards developing RESPONSIBILITY for learning

---

6) *What do you do to encourage students to develop responsible attitudes?*

   You can exemplify if you want.

7) *How beneficial do you think homework is to develop responsible attitudes?*

As regards MONITORING and ASSESSING student's learning process

---

8) *How are students able to monitor and asses their own work?*

9) *What type of assessment tools do you use with your to assess their work?*

10) *In which ways do you use the cultural diversity that multicultural classes offer to plan your lessons?*

11) *What do you think of the use of students' L1 in the classroom? Should your students use L1 or not? Why? / Why Not?*

12) *What are the difficulties that multilingual classes present (if any)?*