

Assessing Learner Autonomy in Moroccan Higher Education: Toward a Localized Measurement Scale

Fatima Zahrae Khabar

Mohammed V University, Morocco

fatimazahrae.khabar@gmail.com

Adil AZHAR

Mohammed V University, Morocco

a.azhar@um5.ac.ma

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i5.2350>

APA Citation: Khabar, F. Z & AZHAR, A. (2025). Assessing Learner Autonomy in Moroccan Higher Education: Toward a Localized Measurement Scale . *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 7(5).330-344. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i5.2350>

Received:

21/08/2025

Accepted:

30/09/2025

Keywords:

Learner autonomy, scale development, language education, Moroccan Higher Education, Assessing learner autonomy.

Abstract

Learner autonomy has become a central goal of education worldwide. To support this goal, it is crucial to measure the autonomy of learners and identify the factors that help or limit their development. Although some instruments exist, many are limited in scope, and they are rarely adapted to local contexts. In Morocco, despite the emphasis on autonomy in the educational policies, no scale has been developed to measure it. This article presents the development of a localized Learner Autonomy Measurement Scale (LAMS) for the Moroccan context. The scale is based on three major frameworks: Benson's (1997, 2001) multidimensional model, Nunan's (1997) developmental stages, and Tassinari's (2012) dynamic model. It consists of thirty items across nine indicators, using a 5-point Likert scale, and is designed to capture autonomy as a multidimensional, developmental, and dynamic construct. This article presents the conceptual development and theoretical grounding of a localized scale to measure learner autonomy, providing a foundation for future empirical validation

1. Introduction

Learner autonomy has been an important focus in Moroccan educational policies, such as the White Book (2002), which identifies the development of study skills leading to learner autonomy as a core aim of English language teaching (Elfatihi, 2019). Despite this emphasis, research on learner autonomy in Moroccan higher education remains underdeveloped. Most existing studies have focused on students' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs (Oussou et al., 2024; Lamkhanter, 2022; Elmoudden, 2023) or examined autonomy through self-assessment questionnaires or qualitative instruments (Khoudri & Zeriouh, 2023). While these studies offer valuable insights into the Moroccan context with regard to learner autonomy, there is still a significant gap in terms of measurement and assessment. To date, no standardized measurement scale has been developed to capture and evaluate learner autonomy in Moroccan higher education settings.

This leads to the central research question of this paper: how to develop a localized scale that captures the multidimensional and dynamic nature of learner autonomy? To address this problem, the study reviews existing literature on learner autonomy and its measurement, identifies key theoretical models (Little, 1991; Nunan, 1997; Tassinari, 2012), and develops a localized quantitative scale suitable for Moroccan higher education. The aim is to design an

instrument that captures the psychological, social, political, and technical dimensions of autonomy and provides a foundation for future validation both in Morocco and other contexts.

The article is structured as follows: the literature review outlines key theoretical perspectives on learner autonomy and existing instruments for its measurement, highlighting their limitations and the need for a broader, localized scale. The methodology section describes the process of scale development, including the selection of indicators, item construction, and refinement. The discussion considers the theoretical contributions, practical applications, and contextual significance of the proposed scale, while also acknowledging its limitations. The article concludes with recommendations for future validation and adaptation studies.

2. Review of the Literature

2.1. Definition and Dimensions of Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy may be perceived as a straightforward concept. However, according to Little (1991), learner autonomy is a concept that many people misunderstand. Therefore, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of this multidimensional construct, this section presents an overview of the various misconceptions surrounding the concept of learner autonomy before exploring its different definitions.

According to Little (1991), “Perhaps the most widespread misconception is that autonomy is synonymous with self-instruction; that it is essentially a matter of deciding to learn without a teacher” (p. 3). Learner autonomy does not entail learners working in isolation; instead, it involves taking responsibility, making informed decisions, reflecting on learning, and engaging with others (Benson, 2011). As Little (1991) adds, the freedoms of autonomy are “never absolute, always conditional and constrained” (p. 5). In other words, Learner autonomy does not mean giving students complete freedom or control over their learning. Instead, it can be viewed as a spectrum, where learners assume varying degrees of responsibility depending on the context and their own needs and preferences.

A second misconception is that autonomy is a teaching method. Some assume it is a technique teachers apply in the classroom. Little (1991) highlights the assumption that “autonomy is something teachers do to their learners; in other words, it is a new methodology” (p. 5). However, Benson (2007) addressed the same point and states that “learner autonomy should not be understood as a methodology, but rather as a 'capacity or ability on the part of the learner'” (p. 5). This means autonomy is less about specific classroom techniques and more about developing learners’ ability to set goals, make decisions, and apply knowledge to real-life situations.

A third misconception is that autonomy is a fixed trait. Some view it as a characteristic that learners either possess or lack. Little (1991) challenges this view by emphasizing that autonomy is not a static concept, but rather a dynamic process that can be fostered through education and reflection. Candy (1991) supports this by stating that “learner autonomy is a constant process open to educational interventions, rather than a state, which is reached once and for all.” Having clarified misconceptions about learner autonomy, the following section explores its history and actual definitions.

The term "Learner Autonomy" was initially coined in 1981 by the French scholar Henri Holec, who is often recognized as a pioneer of learner autonomy. He is also known for providing the most frequently cited definition of learner autonomy (Benson, 2009; Dang, 2010). He defined learner autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning...to take charge of one’s learning is to bear responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning.

(As cited in Benson, 2001, p. 59). Benson (2001) builds on Holec's definition by emphasizing the learners' active engagement and describes learner autonomy as "the capacity to take control over one's own learning" (p. 47). His perspective shifted the focus from the teacher to the learner. Dickinson (1987) also takes a similar approach, viewing autonomy as "a mode of learning; one in which the individual is responsible for all the decisions connected with her learning, and undertakes the implementation of these decisions" (p. 27).

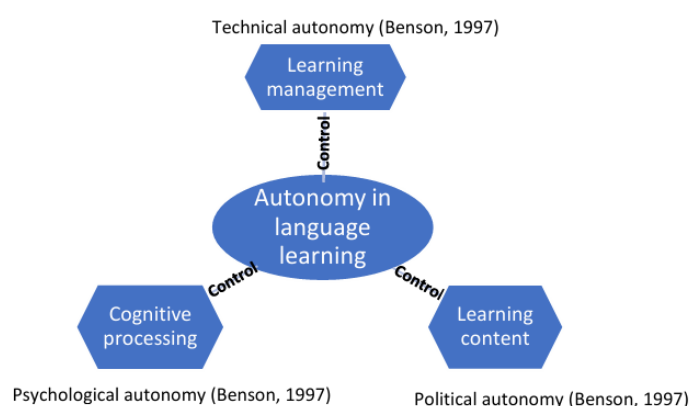
While Benson, Holec, and Dickinson define learner autonomy from a technical perspective, Little (1991) approaches it from both technical and psychological perspectives. He defines it as follows: "Essentially, autonomy is a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts" (p. 4).

The definitions of learner autonomy discussed above are among the earliest and most frequently referenced in the literature. Despite the variations in terminology used to describe learner autonomy as ability, capacity, or control, they all reflect a significant shift in education towards more learner-centered teaching and learning, where learners are expected to assume greater responsibility for and take charge of their own learning. This paper views learner autonomy as a multidimensional construct that combines technical, psychological, social, and political aspects, each of which will be outlined in the next section.

Benson (1997) categorizes learner autonomy under three dimensions: technical, psychological, and political. The first dimension refers to the observable techniques and strategies related to where, when, and how to learn (Benson, 2011). The psychological dimension emphasizes the non-observable behaviors that learners make to take control over learning. This includes the learners' motivational, emotional, and cognitive processes (Benson, 1997). The political dimension refers to the idea of power and control in education. It looks at who makes decisions about learning: the teacher, the institution, or the learner. The different dimensions explained by Benson (1997) are illustrated below:

Figure 1

Dimensions of Learner Autonomy (Benson, 2001; Benson & Voller, 1997)



Oxford (2003) added a fourth dimension of learner autonomy, emphasizing the importance of the context in which autonomy is practiced. According to Oxford (2003), learner autonomy

involves not only the technical, psychological, and political dimensions but also the contextual factors that influence this autonomy, such as institutional support and cultural attitudes.

2.2. Stages of Learner Autonomy Development: Insights from Nunan's (1997) Model

Nunan (1997) made an important contribution to the study of learner autonomy by introducing a clear five-stage model: awareness, involvement, intervention, creation, and transcendence. In the awareness stage, learners begin to understand their learning goals and become conscious of the strategies they use. In the involvement stage, they participate in setting goals, selecting tasks, and making decisions about their learning. The intervention stage is when learners start to monitor their own progress. In the creation stage, learners take full ownership by designing or modifying their own goals and learning activities. Finally, the transcendence stage involves applying learning beyond the classroom.

Table 1

Five-level Model of Learner Autonomy (Nunan, 1997, p.195)

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

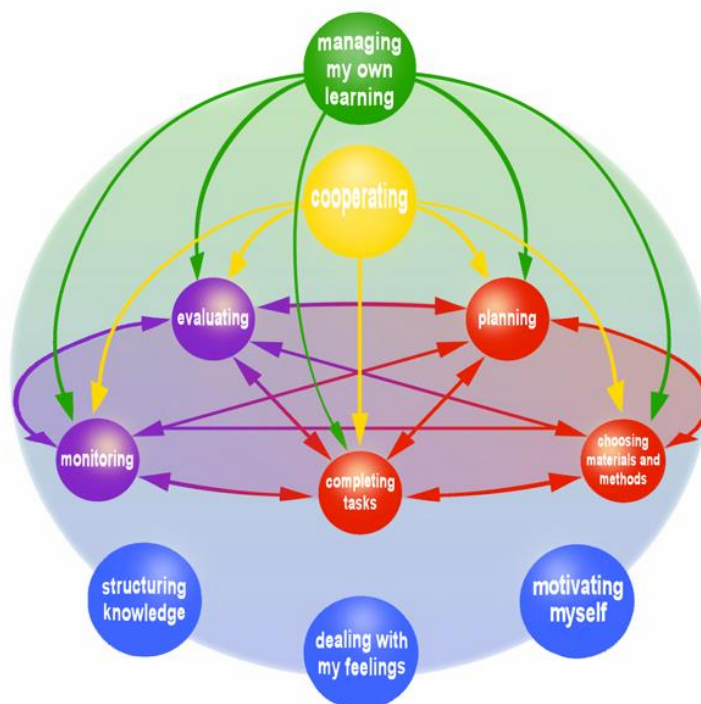
2.3. The Dynamic Model, Tassinari (2012)

In an attempt to assess learner autonomy in higher education contexts, Tassinari (2012) designed a dynamic model of LA, consisting of multiple dimensions of learner autonomy. “The dynamic model accounts for cognitive, metacognitive, action-oriented, and affective components of learner autonomy and provides descriptors of learners’ attitudes, competencies, and behaviors” (Tassinari, 2012, p. 24). Unlike the previous models, which explained LA in set of stages, Tassinari (2012, p. 28) represents the concept of LA in a set of components:

- A cognitive and metacognitive component: cognitive and metacognitive knowledge, awareness, and learners’ beliefs.
- An affective and motivational component: feelings, emotions, willingness, motivation.
- An action-oriented component includes skills, learning behaviors, and decisions.
- A social component: negotiating learning with partners, advisors, and teachers.

The following figure visualizes the dynamic model:

Figure 2



2.4. Measuring Learner Autonomy

Before examining how learner autonomy can be evaluated, it is important to understand the difference between measurement and assessment. Based on Bachman's (2004) theoretical framework, Murase (2015) explains that measuring learner autonomy involves using clear definitions to quantify its features within a specific context. In contrast, assessing learner autonomy means using either numbers or descriptions to observe and interpret students' autonomous behaviors, often to assign them a score or grade. With this distinction, the section begins by discussing the main challenges in measuring learner autonomy, then reviews the most commonly used methods and tools found in the research literature.

According to Benson (2000), if we can clearly define what autonomy is and break it down into a set of indicators, then it should be possible to measure whether a learner is autonomous or not. Benson (2000) also notes that, "when we judge that learners are 'more' or 'less' autonomous... we appear to be observing certain behaviors or abilities and treating them as indexical of autonomy" (p. 65). The key issue, then, is determining which behaviors truly represent autonomy and how accurately we can observe and measure them. Another major challenge is the invisibility of some aspects of autonomy. Benson (2001) points out that certain internal behaviors may never be directly observable. Murase (2015) supports this view, stating that internal processes, such as self-reflection and self-direction, are essential to autonomy but difficult to observe.

Another challenge is the presence of misleading or deceptive indicators of autonomy. For example, a student might ask a teacher for help, which appears to be an autonomous action. However, without knowing the student's real intention, we cannot be sure. They might be acting independently or simply trying to impress the teacher. Breen and Mann (1997) call this the "mask of autonomous behaviour", where students display behaviors that look like autonomy

to meet teacher expectations, even if they are not truly autonomous. As they explain, “learners will give up their autonomy to put on the mask of autonomous behaviour” (Benson, 2001, p. 67). Moreover, Autonomy is inconsistent and variable. Little (1991) points out: autonomy is “*hard-won and its permanence cannot be guaranteed*” (p. 5). Despite these challenges, several scales in the literature demonstrate that learner autonomy can indeed be measured. The following section reviews the most widely cited instruments:

a. The Learner Autonomy Profile (LAP)

One of the most widely used and cited scales for measuring learner autonomy is the Learner Autonomy Profile (LAP), developed in 1994 (Confessore & Park, 2004). The LAP is based on four key dimensions of autonomy: desire, resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence (Confessore, 1994). The full version (LAP 3.0) includes 164 items and has been validated through multiple studies. The main drawback of the LAP is its length, which can be impractical for studies involving large groups. To address this, a short version, the LAP-SF, was created by statistically selecting items from the full version rather than creating new ones. This shorter version contains 66 items, maintains strong reliability, and shows high correlation with the full LAP scores (Confessore & Park, 2004).

Although initially developed for general education, the LAP and LAP-SF have also been used in language education. For example, Tebib (2019) used the LAP-SF in Algeria to measure autonomy among third-year EFL students before and after a creative writing project. Similarly, Buvoltz et al. (2008) used the LAP to explore the relationship between learner autonomy, emotional intelligence, and student retention in an accelerated undergraduate program. Despite its widespread international use, it remains unclear whether the LAP’s four constructs fully represent how autonomy is experienced in Moroccan classrooms.

b. The Measuring Instrument for Language Learner Autonomy (MILLA)

The Measuring Instrument for Language Learner Autonomy (MILLA), developed by Murase (2010, 2015), is another important tool specifically designed to assess autonomy in language learning. Unlike earlier tools such as the Learner Autonomy Profile (LAP), which focused on general learner traits, the MILLA was created with a strong focus on language education and is based on a multidimensional view of learner autonomy.

Through an extensive review of the literature, Murase (2015) redefined learner autonomy into four key dimensions: Technical (skills and strategies), Psychological (motivation and attitudes), Political-philosophical (freedom and control over learning), and Socio-cultural (influences from the learning environment). These dimensions were based on earlier work by Benson (1997, 2001) and Oxford (2003). Murase then developed a Likert-scale questionnaire. The original version comprised 113 items, which were later refined to a shorter 87-item version. The instrument was tested on over 1,500 Japanese university students using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) statistical methods. The MILLA has been widely used in Asian contexts. Swatevacharkul and Boonma (2021) used it to assess international graduate students in Thailand. The scale successfully measured both attitudes and behaviors related to autonomy. Melvina (2021) used the shorter version in Indonesia with undergraduate EFL learners. The tool remained reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .98$) even after adaptation. Although the MILLA was developed in Japan, there is no published research using this scale in Morocco. One possible reason is that some items might reflect Japanese cultural values or educational systems, which may not fully apply in the Moroccan context.

c. The Autonomous English Learning Scale (AELS)

Another important tool is the Autonomous English Learning Scale (AELS), developed by Lin and Reinders (2017). Unlike more general tools like LAP and MILLA, the AELS was created for use in Chinese universities, making it a localized and culturally adapted instrument. The AELS focuses on three areas: self-management (planning, monitoring, and evaluation), Autonomous psychology (confidence, awareness, and motivation), and Autonomous behaviors (observable actions in learning). The final version includes 32 items, with high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha > .93$) and strong validity. However, reducing the items from 72 to 32 may have removed some detail, potentially limiting the instrument's ability to capture the complexity of learner autonomy fully.

d. The Need for a Localized, Multidimensional Scale

The literature offers clear guidance on the key indicators that can be used to measure learner autonomy. There is a range of interrelated dimensions — psychological, social, political, and technical — each contributing to the overall concept of autonomy. From these dimensions emerge concrete indicators, including goal-setting, self-regulation, critical thinking, motivation, learning strategies, self-efficacy, social autonomy, technology use, out-of-class learning, and the application of learning in real-world contexts. These indicators provide the theoretical basis for constructing the proposed scale. While several instruments have been developed to assess aspects of learner autonomy, many of them are limited in scope, context-specific, or based on narrowly defined theoretical perspectives.

Crucially, in the Moroccan context, a notable gap remains in the availability of localized, culturally relevant measurement tools. To date, no standardized or validated scale has been developed specifically for the Moroccan educational system, making it challenging to research or track the development of learner autonomy. Therefore, there is a clear need to develop a multidimensional, localized scale that both synthesizes classical theories (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Benson, 2001) and integrates contemporary frameworks, notably Nunan's five-level (1997) and Tassinari's dynamic model (2015). Such a scale would serve as a foundation for future empirical research and provide educators with an instrument to better understand and support the development of learner autonomy among university students.

3. Methodology: Scale Development

The development of the proposed scale was conceptual and theoretical, rather than empirical. It is based on an extensive review of the literature on learner autonomy, incorporating both classical theories (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Benson, 2001) and contemporary models (Nunan, 1997; Bandura, 1995; Bjork, Dunlosky, Kornell, 2013; Tassinari, 2015). The purpose of this phase was to construct a theoretically grounded framework that could later serve as the basis for pilot testing and empirical validation. Thus, the current version of the scale represents a conceptual instrument awaiting psychometric testing in future research. Three complementary models of learner autonomy guided the construction of the scale:

Models	Key dimensions/stages
--------	-----------------------

Benson (1997, 2001) – Multidimensional Model	Technical: Planning, monitoring, evaluating Psychological: goal-setting, self-regulation, self-efficacy, motivation, strategies Political: active participation in society
Nunan (1997) – Developmental Model	Awareness: recognizing styles and strategies Involvement: taking part in decisions Intervention: adapting goals and methods Creation: designing and reflecting on learning Transcendence: applying learning beyond the classroom
Tassinari (2012) – Dynamic Model	Cognitive, metacognitive, social, affective

Based on the integration of Benson's multidimensional framework, Nunan's developmental stages, and Tassinari's dynamic model, this study defines learner autonomy as: "A multidimensional, developmental, and dynamic capacity through which learners take responsibility for their learning by setting goals, self-regulating their strategies and motivation, engaging critically and socially, applying knowledge in real-world contexts, and effectively using available resources, including technology. Autonomy emerges as a continuum of interrelated dimensions that evolve over time and across contexts".

3.1. Selection of indicators

The selection of indicators is the most critical step in developing the scale. Drawing on Benson's (1997, 2001) multidimensional model, Nunan's (1997) developmental stages, and Tassinari's (2012) dynamic model, nine indicators were identified to help measure learner autonomy. During the refinement process, the original ten indicators were reduced to nine. The category of "Out-of-Class Activities" was removed because it overlapped considerably with other indicators such as motivation, social autonomy, technology use, and real-world application. Its items were redistributed to the most relevant categories after a close analysis of their content. In parallel, overlapping items within categories were removed, and underrepresented indicators were expanded to maintain balance. As a result, the final scale consists of 30 items, with three items per indicator except for "Application of Learning in Real-World Contexts", which includes six items, due to its central importance in capturing both the political dimension of autonomy and the transcendence stage of Nunan's model. The following section justifies each indicator:

Goal-Setting (3 items)

Goal-setting is a central element of learner autonomy. Holec (1981, as cited in Little, 1991) defines autonomy as the ability to take charge of one's own learning, which involves determining objectives, selecting methods and techniques, organizing content, and evaluating outcomes. In this sense, an autonomous learner is expected to set their own goals and take responsibility for directing their learning. Goal-setting also creates a natural link to the next indicator, self-regulation, as learners must monitor and evaluate their progress to achieve the objectives they have defined.

Self-Regulation (3 items)

Self-regulation refers to the learner's ability to monitor, evaluate, and adjust their own learning. Autonomous learners not only accurately assess their progress but also effectively manage their time, tasks, and strategies to improve performance (Bjork, Dunlosky, & Kornell, 2013). This indicator highlights the active role learners play in reviewing their work, identifying areas for improvement, and taking practical steps to enhance their learning outcomes.

Critical Thinking (3 items)

According to Little (1991), learner autonomy requires learners to think critically when planning, monitoring, and self-evaluating their own learning. In a similar vein, Winch (2006) argues that the use of critical thinking is significant for the development of autonomy. According to him, autonomy is defined as the ability to make rational decisions. "If one is presented with choices and asked to make an informed and rational judgment, one must be able to evaluate the various consequences entailed by each choice" (p. 4)

Motivation (3 items)

Dickinson (1995) argues that "enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their own learning" (p. 14). In other words, if learners are not motivated, they cannot be autonomous and take responsibility for their own learning.

Learning Strategies (3 items)

Autonomous learners use effective strategies. Oxford (1990, cited in Liu, 2015) defines strategies as specific actions that enhance learning effectiveness, transferability, and enjoyment. Nunan (1997) also places strategy awareness at the first stage of developing autonomy. This indicator assesses how learners identify, vary, and apply strategies according to different learning situations.

Self-Efficacy (3 items)

According to Bandura (1995), self-efficacy is defined as the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the actions necessary to manage future situations (p. 2). Bandura (1997) argues that students with a high sense of self-efficacy are more likely to manage their learning process successfully, set challenging goals, and remain motivated.

Social Autonomy (3 items)

Little (1991) highlights the importance of the social dimension of learner autonomy and introduces what is referred to as social autonomy. According to Little (1991), autonomous learners are more likely to initiate discussions, negotiate meanings, and participate in social contexts.

Application of Learning to Wider Contexts / Active Participation in Society (6 items)

This indicator reflects the ability of learners to extend their learning beyond the classroom and apply it in diverse real-world contexts. Nunan (1997) refers to this stage as transcendence, where learners make connections between classroom knowledge and the world outside. Similarly, Holec (1981, as cited in Little, 1991) emphasizes that autonomy is demonstrated when learners transfer what they have learned to everyday life and contribute positively to their communities. This perspective also aligns with the political dimension of autonomy discussed by Little (1991), in which learners are viewed not only as products of society but also as active participants who can shape and influence it. Items in this category capture learners' ability to

apply knowledge practically, engage in civic or cultural activities, and broaden their learning across different domains. This indicator is given greater weight, with six items, due to its significance in linking autonomy to lifelong and civic learning.

Effective Use of Technology (3 items)

Technology plays a crucial role in promoting autonomy in contemporary contexts. Studies (Lewis, 2014; Little & Thorne, 2017; Peeters & Ludwig, 2017) show that technology encourages learners to move from teacher-dependent to self-directed learning. Items in this category assess how learners use digital resources, participate in online communities, and adopt new tools to enhance independent learning.

3.2. Item Development

The item development process started by turning the theoretical indicators of learner autonomy into clear and measurable statements. All items were designed in the form of self-report statements that reflected the behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs of autonomous learners. Participants have to rate each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Never (1) to Always (5). This format was chosen because it allows for capturing the frequency and consistency of behaviors while offering sufficient variability to distinguish between different levels of autonomy (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010).

The initial pool of items was generated directly from the literature on learner autonomy, drawing on the definitions of each indicator. For instance, items on goal-setting asked participants about whether they identify their objectives and learning goals, while self-regulation items focused on reviewing progress and reflecting on strategies. Items were written in simple, clear language relevant to the level of university students. Each item describes specific, recognizable actions that learners can easily evaluate in their own practice.

A key step in item development was refinement and balance. The initial draft included overlapping items that addressed multiple indicators simultaneously. For instance, items originally generated under "out-of-class activities" overlapped with motivation, social autonomy, and technology use. After close analysis, these items were redistributed to the most appropriate categories, while redundancies were removed. To ensure balance, indicators that initially had only two items (e.g., motivation, self-efficacy) were expanded to three items by generating additional statements aligned with the theoretical definitions. Alternatively, categories with more items were reduced to avoid overrepresentation.

The only exception was the indicator "Application of Learning in Real-World Contexts", which retained six items. This decision was justified because of the central role this dimension plays in both Little's (1991) political perspective of autonomy and Nunan's (1997) transcendence stage. Finally, the clarity and precision of items were reviewed to strengthen their alignment with the intended construct. Items were screened for redundancy, with similar statements merged or eliminated to avoid repetition. Each retained item was checked against the theoretical rationale of its indicator to ensure that it contributed uniquely to the measurement of learner autonomy.

Overall, the item development process ensured that the scale is both concise and practical for classroom use while also being broad and comprehensive enough for research purposes. The resulting instrument captures the multidimensional and dynamic nature of learner autonomy in a way that is theoretically grounded, methodologically balanced, and adaptable for future validation studies.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to design a scale that captures learner autonomy as a multidimensional construct. The instrument developed here is not only a list of items but also a conceptual framework for understanding autonomy in applied linguistics and language education. The discussion highlights the study's faced challenges, its theoretical contributions, practical applications, relevance to the Moroccan context, and its limitations.

Measuring learner autonomy is a complex task, and many existing instruments in the literature primarily measure autonomy as a psychological construct, focusing on self-regulation, motivation, or strategy use, while neglecting its social, political, and technical dimensions (Benson, 2001; Little, 1991). In addition, most scales restrict learner autonomy to classroom learning and do not consider how learners apply what they learn to wider social and cultural contexts. Such reductionist approaches weaken the theoretical validity of these instruments and fail to capture the multidimensional nature of autonomy emphasized in more recent models (Tassinari, 2012).

Another challenge is the overlap between autonomy dimensions, which makes it difficult to separate the indicators clearly. For instance, the use of technology may also reflect motivation or social engagement. While this overlap is often viewed as a methodological issue, it can also be seen as evidence of autonomy as a dynamic and interconnected concept. Finally, many existing scales have been developed in specific cultural or institutional contexts (e.g., East Asian or European universities). They may not be fully applicable in other settings, such as Morocco. This lack of localized instruments leaves a gap in both research and practice.

4.1. Pedagogical Implications

One of the main contributions of this study is its reinforcement of the idea that learner autonomy must be viewed as multidimensional, developmental, and dynamic.

- **Multidimensional:** The proposed scale integrates psychological (goal-setting, self-regulation, self-efficacy, motivation, and learning strategies), social, political, and technical dimensions, as outlined by Little (1991). This holistic approach goes beyond narrower understandings of autonomy that treat it only as self-study or individual choice.
- **Developmental:** By drawing on Nunan's (1997) framework, the scale acknowledges that autonomy does not emerge fully formed but develops in stages: from basic awareness of strategies to higher levels of intervention, creation, and transcendence. This developmental perspective enables teachers and researchers to recognize that autonomy can be nurtured gradually, rather than being expected as an immediate outcome.
- **Dynamic:** Following Tassinari (2012), the scale views autonomy as flexible, context-dependent, and constantly evolving. Learners may exhibit varying levels of autonomy in different situations, and these dimensions often overlap and reinforce one another.

The scale also offers several practical implications. In the classroom, the LAMS can be used as an assessment tool. It can help teachers understand the extent to which students can set goals, regulate their own learning, employ effective strategies, and apply knowledge beyond the classroom. This information can help teachers design interventions to support weaker areas of autonomy.

For researchers, the scale provides a theoretically grounded instrument that can be applied in different studies on autonomy. Because it covers multiple dimensions, it can be linked with related constructs such as motivation, technology use, or lifelong learning. It also opens possibilities for longitudinal studies that track how autonomy develops over time.

4.2. Limitations

While this study makes several contributions, it also has important limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the scale remains at the conceptual and theoretical stage. Although the indicators and items are grounded in established frameworks (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Benson, 1997; Nunan, 1997; Tassinari, 2012; Murase, 2015), the instrument has not yet been piloted with learners. As a result, questions of reliability, validity, and factor structure remain unanswered. Future empirical testing will be crucial to confirm the validity and usefulness of the scale.

Second, despite efforts to avoid redundancy, some overlap between indicators may remain. While this is consistent with Tassinari's (2012) view of autonomy as dynamic and interconnected, it may complicate statistical validation and interpretation. Third, the scale was designed with a particular emphasis on the Moroccan educational context, where localized instruments are lacking. Although this adds contextual value, it also means that the scale may need to be adapted before being applied in other settings. Cultural differences in how autonomy is understood and practiced may affect the relevance of certain items. The decision to limit the instrument to 30 items represents a balance between breadth and practicality.

In sum, this study provides an initial framework for measuring learner autonomy that is both conceptually grounded and practical for use. As the first attempt to design such a scale in the Moroccan context, it lays important groundwork for localized research on autonomy. With future refinement and validation, the proposed scale could become a valuable tool for teachers, researchers, and policymakers in Moroccan higher education.

REFERENCES

- Bachman, L. F. (2004). *Statistical analyses for language assessment*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W H Freeman/Times Books/ Henry Holt & Co.
- Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning* (Applied linguistics in action). Longman.
- Benson, P. (2007). Autonomy in language teaching and learning. *Language Teaching*, 40(1), 21–40. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444806003958>
- Benson, P. (2009). Making sense of autonomy in language learning. In R. Pemberton, S. Toogood, & A. Barfield (Eds.), *Maintaining control: Autonomy and language learning* (pp. 13–26). Hong Kong University Press.
- Benson, P. (2011). *Teaching and researching: Autonomy in language learning* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315833767>
- Benson, P., & Voller, P. (Eds.). (1997). *Autonomy and independence in language learning*. Longman.
- Bjork, R. A., Dunlosky, J., & Kornell, N. (2013). Self-regulated learning: Beliefs, techniques, and illusions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 64, 417–444. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143823>
- Breen, M. P., & Mann, S. (1997). Shooting arrows at the sun: Perspectives on a pedagogy for autonomy. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 132–149). Longman.
- Buvoltz, K. A., Powell, F. J., Solan, A. M., & Longbotham, G. J. (2008). Exploring emotional intelligence, learner autonomy, and retention in an accelerated undergraduate degree completion program. *New Horizons in Adult Education & Human Resource Development*, 22(3–4). <https://doi.org/10.1002/nha3.10315>
- Candy, P. C. (1991). *Self-direction for lifelong learning: A comprehensive guide to theory and practice*. Jossey-Bass.
- Carr, P. B. (1999). *The measurement of resourcefulness intentions in the adult autonomous learner* (Doctoral dissertation, The George Washington University).
- Confessore, G. J., & Park, E. (2004). Factor validation of the Learner Autonomy Profile, version 3.0 and extraction of the short form. *International Journal of Self-Directed Learning*, 1(1), 39–58.
- Confessore, S. J., & Confessore, G. J. (1994). *Learner profiles: A cross-sectional study of selected factors associated with self-directed learning*. Oklahoma Research Center for Continuing Professional and Higher Education.
- Dafei, D. (2007). An exploration of the relationship between learner autonomy and English proficiency. *Asian EFL Journal*, 24(4), 24–34.
- Dang, T. T. (2010). Learner autonomy in EFL studies in Vietnam: A discussion from sociocultural perspective. *English Language Teaching*, 3(2), 3–9. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v3n2p3>
- Dickinson, L. (1987). *Self-instruction in language learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dickinson, L. (1995). Autonomy and motivation: A literature review. *System*, 23(2), 165–174.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Taguchi, T. (2010). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- EL MOUDDEN, A., & Lamkhanter, F. (2023). Exploring learning autonomy: An investigation into the perceptions and practices of ENCG students in the acquisition of English language skills. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 5(4), 207–221. <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v5i4.1484>

- Elfatihi, M. (2019). ELT in Morocco: Past, present and future. *Research in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3, 6–15.
- Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Pergamon Press.
- Khoudri, I., Khoudri, A., & Zeriuoh, M. (2023). Enhancing EFL learner autonomy through project-based learning: The case of secondary school students. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 8(3), 341–352. <https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v8.i3.1199>
- Lamkhanter, F. (2022). Learner autonomy: Attitudes and practices of Moroccan university students in English departments. *International Journal of Language & Literary Studies*, 4(1), 189–207. <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v4i1.811>
- Lewis, T. (2014). Learner autonomy and the theory of sociality. In G. Murray (Ed.), *Social dimensions of autonomy in language learning* (pp. 37–59). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lin, L., & Reinders, H. (2017). Assessing learner autonomy: Development and validation of a localized scale. *New Language Learning and Teaching Environments*, 3, 307–328. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-60092-9_14
- Little, D. (1991). *Learner autonomy 1: Definitions, issues and problems*. Authentik.
- Little, D., & Thorne, S. L. (2017). From learner autonomy to rewilding: A discussion. In M. Cappellini, T. Lewis, & A. Rivens Mompean (Eds.), *Learner autonomy and Web 2.0* (pp. 12–35). Equinox Publishing.
- Liu, H. (2015). Learner autonomy: The role of motivation in foreign language learning. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 6(6), 1165–1174. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0606.02>
- Melvina, M., & Julia, J. (2021). Learner autonomy and English proficiency of Indonesian undergraduate students. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 16(2), 803–818.
- Murase, F. (2015). Measuring language learner autonomy: Problems and possibilities. In C. J. Everhard & L. Murphy (Eds.), *Assessment and autonomy in language learning: Theory, practice, and future directions* (pp. 35–63). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nunan, D. (1997). Designing and adapting materials to encourage learner autonomy. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 192–203). Longman.
- Oussou, S., Kerouad, S., & Hdii, S. (2024). Learner autonomy: Moroccan EFL university students' beliefs and readiness. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 11(1), 116–132. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v11i1.30007>
- Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Newbury House.
- Oxford, R. L. (2003). Toward a more systematic model of L2 learner autonomy. In D. Palfreyman & R. C. Smith (Eds.), *Learner autonomy across cultures* (pp. 75–91). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Peeters, W., & Ludwig, C. (2017). 'Old concepts in new spaces'? – A model for developing learner autonomy in social networking spaces. In M. Cappellini, T. Lewis, & A. Rivens Mompean (Eds.), *Learner autonomy and Web 2.0* (pp. 117–142). Equinox Publishing.
- Swatevacharkul, R., & Boonma, N. (2021). Learner autonomy assessment of English language teaching students in an international program in Thailand. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(3), 751–761.
- Tassinari, M. G. (2012). Evaluating learner autonomy: A dynamic model with descriptors. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 3(1), 24–40. <https://doi.org/10.37237/030103>
- Tassinari, M. G. (2015). Assessing learner autonomy: A dynamic model. In C. J. Everhard & L. Murphy (Eds.), *Assessment and autonomy in language learning* (pp. 64–88). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137414380_4
- Tebib, D. (2019). Fostering learner autonomy through writing: Metacognitive perspectives. *Expressions*, (8), 195–208.
- Winch, C. (2006). *Education, autonomy and critical thinking*. Routledge