LEARNER AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: TEACHERS’ BELIEFS

Nguyen Thanh Nga

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Education

Queensland University of Technology

April, 2014
Keywords

Learner autonomy, teachers’ beliefs, teachers’ practices, relationship between beliefs and practices, social constructivism, case study, mixed methods research, stimulated-recall interviews, video observation, English as a foreign language (EFL), Vietnamese university contexts.
Abstract

This case study research investigated the extent to which Vietnamese teachers understood the concept of learner autonomy and how their beliefs about this concept were applied in their teaching practices. Despite the fact that learner autonomy is gaining momentum as an educational phenomenon and various research has sought to create solutions for fostering learner autonomy in Asian countries, there is very little research on how teachers’ beliefs are enacted in teaching practices, especially in Vietnamese context. Data were collected through two phases of the study, utilising both quantitative methods (researcher-generated survey) and qualitative methods (interviews, stimulated recall interviews, video observations). This study found that teachers generally lacked understanding about learner autonomy and there was an alignment between teachers’ beliefs and their actual teaching practices regarding learner autonomy, resulting in little evidence of learner autonomy found in any of the case study classrooms. The findings of this study will provide teachers and policy-makers new insights into learner autonomy against the backdrop of educational reforms in Vietnam.
# Table of Contents

Keywords ........................................................................................................................... i
Abstract ............................................................................................................................. ii
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... iii
List of Figures .................................................................................................................. vi
List of Tables .................................................................................................................... vii
List of Abbreviations ...................................................................................................... viii
Statement of Original Authorship .................................................................................. ix
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... x

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study .......................................................................................... 1
1.2 The study context ...................................................................................................... 6
1.3 Significance of the study .......................................................................................... 12
1.4 The purpose of the study ....................................................................................... 12
1.5 Overview of the thesis ............................................................................................ 14

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definitions of learner autonomy ............................................................................. 15
2.2 Approaches to fostering learner autonomy ............................................................. 22
   2.2.1 Resource-based approach .................................................................................. 22
   2.2.2 Technology-based approach .......................................................................... 24
   2.2.3 Curriculum-based approach ......................................................................... 25
   2.2.4 Classroom-based approach ........................................................................... 27
   2.2.5 Learner-based approach ................................................................................ 28
   2.2.6 Teacher-based approaches ............................................................................ 30
2.3 Fostering learner autonomy in Vietnamese contexts ............................................ 31
   2.3.1 Fostering learner autonomy in Asian contexts .............................................. 31
   2.3.2 Approaches to fostering learner autonomy in the Vietnamese context ....... 35
2.4 Teachers’ beliefs in relation to learner autonomy .................................................. 37
   2.4.1 Beliefs ........................................................................................................... 38
   2.4.2 Teachers’ beliefs ............................................................................................ 40
   2.4.3 Teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy .................................................... 44
   2.4.4 Factors affecting teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy ......................... 46
2.5 Teachers’ Behaviour ............................................................................................... 47
   2.5.1 Role of the teacher ......................................................................................... 47
   2.5.2 Teachers’ role in fostering learner autonomy in the Vietnamese context .... 54
   2.5.3 The relationship between teachers’ beliefs and behaviour regarding learner autonomy .... 55
2.6 Summary ................................................................................................................ 59

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Rationale for case study approach ........................................................................... 60
3.2 Mixed methods design ......................................................................................... 61
3.3 Phase 1 of the research ........................................................................................................ 64
  3.3.1 Justification for survey design for Phase 1 of the research ........................................ 64
  3.3.2 Survey construction .................................................................................................... 65
  3.3.3 Survey administration ............................................................................................... 67
  3.3.4 Participants in Phase 1 of the research ................................................................... 67
  3.3.5 Data analysis ............................................................................................................ 69
  3.3.6 Reliability of the survey ......................................................................................... 70
3.4 Phase 2 of the research- Case study ................................................................................ 71
  3.4.1 Justification for case study design ........................................................................... 72
  3.4.2 Participants in the Phase 2 of the research ................................................................. 72
  3.4.3 Interviews .............................................................................................................. 73
  3.4.4 Field notes .............................................................................................................. 81
  3.4.5 Recording interviews ............................................................................................. 82
  3.4.6 Data analysis procedure ........................................................................................ 82
3.5 Ethics.................................................................................................................................. 90
  3.5.1 Informed consent..................................................................................................... 90
  3.5.2 Anonymity ............................................................................................................. 91
  3.5.3 Confidentiality ...................................................................................................... 91
  3.5.4 Storage of information .......................................................................................... 92
  3.5.5 Level of risk .......................................................................................................... 92
3.6 Summary .......................................................................................................................... 93

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS ............................................................................... 94
4.1 Results and Findings from Phase 1 of the Research ......................................................... 94
  4.1.1 Results from LALL:TB – Sense of responsibility .................................................... 94
  4.1.2 Results from LALL:TB – Beliefs about students .................................................... 96
  4.1.3 Results from LALL:TB – Constraints to autonomy ............................................. 97
  4.1.4 Results from LALL:TB – Fostering autonomy ..................................................... 98
  4.1.5 Results from LALL:TB – Teachers’ overall beliefs ............................................. 100
  4.1.6 Summary of Phase 1 ............................................................................................. 106
4.2 Results and Findings from Phase 2 of the research ......................................................... 107
  4.2.1 Participant 1 - Thu ................................................................................................. 108
  4.2.2 Participant 2 - Ngan .............................................................................................. 118
  4.2.3 Participant 3 - Bich .............................................................................................. 128
  4.2.4 Participant 4 - Ha ................................................................................................. 136
  4.2.5 Summary of Phase 2 ............................................................................................. 144
4.3 Summary .......................................................................................................................... 147

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION .................................................................................................... 149
5.1 Teachers’ beliefs regarding the concept of learner autonomy ............................................ 149
  5.1.1 Linguistic factors .................................................................................................... 149
  5.1.2 Teachers’ understanding of learner autonomy ....................................................... 152
5.2 Alignment between teachers’ beliefs and teachers’ practices ............................................. 154
  5.2.1 Teachers’ role in promoting learner autonomy ....................................................... 154
  5.2.2 The degree of alignment between teachers’ beliefs and practices .......................... 155
  5.2.3 Traditional teaching practices in Vietnam ............................................................. 156
  5.2.4 Perceived barriers to fostering learner autonomy .................................................. 157
  5.2.5 Teachers’ view of their students’ abilities to become autonomous learners ............ 159
5.3 The influence of socio-cultural factors on learner autonomy ............................................. 162
  5.3.1 Learning autonomy in the EFL teaching context ................................................... 163
  5.3.2 Traditional classroom arrangement ........................................................................ 165
  5.3.3 Test-oriented teaching/ Textbook-based teaching .................................................. 166
  5.3.4 Teaching experience ............................................................................................. 171
  5.3.5 Working conditions for teachers .......................................................................... 173
5.3.6 The influence of social-cultural factors on the relationship between beliefs and practices 174

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Summary</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Contributions from the research</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Methodological contributions</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Pedagogical contributions</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Limitations</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Recommendations</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 Conclusion</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 2.1 The relationships of triadic reciprocity for learner autonomy ........................................... 56
Figure 3.1 Position of Cameras for Video recording ................................................................................. 79
Figure 3.2 Procedure of using stimulated recall interviews in the study .................................................. 80
Figure 3.3 Convergence of evidence ........................................................................................................ 82
Figure 3.4 Translating Procedure ............................................................................................................. 86
Figure 3.5 A Visual Model of the Coding Process in Qualitative Research ............................................ 89
Figure 3.6 Data analysis process .............................................................................................................. 90
Figure 3.7 Summary of the research data collection .................................................................................. 93
Figure 4.1 Teachers’ overall beliefs about learner autonomy ................................................................. 102
List of Tables

Table 2.1 Discipline comparison in teacher-centred and person-centred classrooms: ........................ 47
Table 2.2 Strategies associated with different features of autonomy support ........................................ 52
Table 2.3 Comparison between autonomy-focused & institution-focused classrooms ............................ 54
Table 3.1 Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB) Summary of the Survey Categories ........................................................................................................... 66
Table 3.2 Procedure of conducting the survey .......................................................................................... 68
Table 3.3 Demographic information of the participants in Phase 1 ........................................................... 69
Table 3.4 Means and Standard Deviations for Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB) .................................................................................................................. 70
Table 3.5 Reliability of Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB) ........................ 71
Table 3.6 Demographics of Case Study Participants ............................................................................... 73
Table 4.1 Teachers’ Beliefs about Responsibility ...................................................................................... 95
Table 4.2 Teachers’ Beliefs about Students’ Ability to be Autonomous .................................................... 97
Table 4.3 Teachers’ Beliefs about Constraints to Fostering Learner Autonomy .......................................... 98
Table 4.4 Teachers’ Beliefs about Approaches to Fostering Learner Autonomy ......................................... 100
Table 4.5 Teachers’ Overall Beliefs about Learner Autonomy in Language Learning ............................... 101
Table 4.6 Correlations among Subscales: Teachers’ Responsibility, Students’ Ability to be Autonomous, Constraints to Autonomy and Fostering Autonomy ......................................................... 103
Table 4.7 Comparison of the Teachers Responding with High and Low Perceptions of Students’ Ability to be Autonomous ........................................................................................................... 104
Table 4.8 Definitions of the term ‘Learner autonomy’ ................................................................................ 105
Table 4.9 Comparison of the additional Characteristics of Responding with High and Low Perceptions of their Students’ Ability to be Autonomous ....................................................................... 106
Table 4.10 Teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy ............................................................................... 145
Table 4.11 Relationships between Teachers’ beliefs and their actual practices ......................................... 146
List of Abbreviations

BH: Behaviour
CALL: Computer-assisted language learning
EdD: Doctor of education
EFL: English as foreign language
ESL: English as second language
IELTS: International English language testing system
LA: Learner autonomy
LALL:TB: Learner autonomy in language teaching: Teachers’ beliefs
PhD: Doctor of philosophy
RQ: Research question
SR: Stimulated recall
SRI: Stimulated recall interview
SPSS: Statistical package for the social science
TB: Teachers’ beliefs
TESOL: Teaching English to students of other languages
Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: _______________________

Nguyen Thanh Nga

Date: 02 April, 2014
Acknowledgements

Along my PhD journey, I have learnt, experienced and shifted myself to become more autonomous. I understand and believe in the importance of the negotiation and support in developing an autonomous person. This thesis would have been impossible without the support, encouragement, help and suggestions of my supervisors, colleagues, friends and family.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisors: Dr. Donna Tangen and Dr. Denise Beutel for their invaluable guidance, help and support throughout the journey. They have provided me with their expert knowledge and clarity of thought and have kept me on track and on task over the past three years. I would also like to thank EdD-11 Teaching Team, especially to Professor Steve Ritchie, Associate Professor Jim Watters for their advice and assistance in my first year of the journey. I also gratefully acknowledge my Confirmation and Final Oral panel members: Professor John Lidstone, Dr. Rod Neilsen, Associate Professor Sue Walker, and Dr. Karen Woodman who gave me critical and supportive feedback to help me make my thesis better. I am really grateful to anonymous external examiners who offered me insightful advice to strengthen my thesis. Especially, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Louise Mercer for her great assistance with my quantitative data and my thesis.

Many thanks go to my friends and colleagues in Australia and Vietnam as well as staff from Centre for Learning Innovation and Office of Education. I highly appreciate their assistance, understanding and support.

Special thanks to my parents, my husband and my son for their love, support and being with me along my PhD journey in Australia and in my life.

Last but not least, I also gratefully acknowledge Vietnamese government, Queensland University of Technology, Australia, and National University of Art Education, Vietnam for awarding me scholarships and assistance.
Chapter 1: Introduction

“Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish and he eats for a lifetime”

An ancient proverb

The above proverb describes the principles underlying the current research. The context of the study is in Vietnamese higher education where the traditional teacher-led approach is still common. Teaching and learning English in Vietnam is limited to ‘giving students a fish’ and far from ‘teaching them how to fish’; that is, the main task of the teacher is to transmit the knowledge to his/her students (Trinh, 2005) rather than encouraging students to become autonomous in their learning. Learner autonomy is a relatively new concept in Vietnam but one that is now mandated by government policy in education. This research will explore to what extent teachers in Vietnam understand the concept of learner autonomy and how their beliefs about the construct are applied in teaching English-as-a-foreign language (EFL) at universities.

In the current research, learner autonomy is defined as a learner’s willingness and ability to take responsibility to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate his/her learning in tasks that are constructed in negotiation with and support from the teacher. For teachers, to foster learner autonomy, they must have an understanding of the concept and an understanding of what strategies would be effective for them to use to foster the development of learner autonomy. Furthermore, teachers must have a belief that learner autonomy is worth incorporating into their pedagogy. To date, there is no research that focuses on the role of teachers in Vietnam supporting students’ development of learner autonomy. This case study research aims to address this gap in the research with the goal of metaphorically ‘teaching students how to fish so that they eat for a lifetime’.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This section provides background information for choosing the current topic, including the benefits of fostering learner autonomy in education; it explores the need for a
comprehensive definition of learner autonomy from among various interpretations and understandings as well as misconceptions of the term. This chapter will also provide a discussion on the gap in the research in relation to fostering learner autonomy in general and in particular countries where there is a high emphasis on the interdependence between teachers and their learners and the high authority of teachers over students in the classroom, such as with higher education in Vietnam.

*Learner Autonomy in Language Education*

Learner autonomy in English as a foreign language (EFL) education has received great interest from researchers all around the world with a great deal of the research originating in Europe (see Dam, 1995; Holec, 1981; Little, 1991). It has been further researched and developed by Asian researchers in countries such as Hong Kong (Benson, 2001; Littlewood, 2007) and Japan (Aoki, 2001; Aoki & Smith, 1999). The research on learner autonomy education recognises the benefits and the possibility of fostering learner autonomy in language education (Benson, 2007). However, from different perspectives, researchers have approached learner autonomy differently, as a result, there exist various definitions of learner autonomy and attempts to apply learner autonomy in a particular context, especially research in Asian contexts (Benson, 2007). This research recognises the global trend of an increased approach to learner-centred pedagogy.

The benefits of fostering learner autonomy in language education can be summarised into three major areas (Little, 1991). First, as the student is involved in the decision-making process, “learning should be more focused and purposeful, and thus more effective both immediately and in the longer term” (Little, 1991, p. 8). Second, as it is the “learner’s responsibility for their learning process, the constraints between learning and living that are often found in traditional teacher-centered educational structures should be minimized” (Littlewood, 1997, p. 72). Lastly, it is believed that when a student is autonomous for his/her own learning, it is more likely that (s)he will be responsible in other areas in his/her life, and as consequence, (s)he will be a useful and more effective member of the society (Little, 1991). The evidence of the benefits of developing learner autonomy in education and language learning has been shown in research such as that of Littlewood (1997), Dam (2008), Benson (2008) and Hamilton (2013). The trend, however, has been to research the application of learner autonomy in particular educational contexts such as in mainstream language
education environments (Benson, 2007). Today, however, there is a growing trend to explore learner autonomy in foreign language contexts (Benson, 2013). The current research follows this trend.

Various definitions of learner autonomy

While it is not known when the term ‘learner autonomy’ was first used as pedagogy, it appeared officially for the first time in second language education in the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project in 1979 by Holec. This led to the publication of Holec’s 1981 seminal report (Holec, 1981), in which he defined learner autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3). In this definition, Holec treated learner autonomy as an attribute of the learner. Following this, various other definitions of learner autonomy have been used. For example, Wenden (1999) indicated the importance of metacognitive awareness when she claimed that true learner autonomy refers to how students reflect on their learning and how they are able to realise when they have effective learning opportunities. In another example, Littlewood (1996) took the notion of autonomy as “learners’ ability and willingness to make choices independently” (p. 427). He argued that “this capacity depends on two main components: ability and willingness” (p. 428). These two abilities are interdependent and are divided into subcomponents of knowledge about the alternative choices and skills available for carrying out appropriate choices. Willingness depends on the motivation and confidence a person has in order to take responsibility for necessary choices. In order to become autonomous successfully, a person needs to have the four subcomponents of knowledge, skills, motivation, and confidence. Littlewood also suggested that these components be focused in the development of learner autonomy.

There exists so many definitions and interpretations of learner autonomy that Benson (2009) described three metaphors for three strategies that researchers have employed to define learner autonomy. The first metaphor is the: “the kaleidoscopic strategy” (p. 18) which is used when the researchers accept all previous and current definitions about learner autonomy equally, and then makes a macro-definition. The second strategy is called “the exegetical” (p. 19). Using this strategy, researchers go back to an earlier source (such as Holec’s), interpret it and argue that this interpretation represents the core meaning. This can be seen clearly in the research that uses Holec’s original definition, like Benson’s (1997). The third strategy is the “quintessential strategy” which involves an attempt to try to discover
and/or isolate, what is most essential to learner autonomy. For instance, Little (2007) combines his own definition (Little, 1995) with that of Holec (1981). According to Benson (2009) the third strategy is ‘clearly the strongest of the three’. The definition of learner autonomy for the current research is: a learner’s willingness and ability to take responsibility, to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate his/her learning with tasks that are constructed in negotiation with and support from the teacher. While the literature has revealed a great number of definitions of learner autonomy, this lack of clarity has created some misconceptions that need to be dispelled.

**Misconceptions about learner autonomy**

Little (1991) describes five potential misconceptions about learner autonomy. It is stated that “the most widespread misconception is that autonomy is synonymous with self-instruction” (Little, 1993, p. 3). Self-instruction, however, means learning without a teacher (Little, 1991) or learning without direct control of a teacher (Dickinson, 1987). Little (1995) distinguished this term from the concept of learner autonomy in that there is greater interdependence between teacher and learners in learner autonomy. Other words that have been substituted for learner autonomy are self-access learning, self-directed learning, independent learning and self-regulated learning. Self-access learning is learning from materials/facilities that are organised to facilitate learning and self-instruction in using these materials (Dickinson, 1987; Miller & Ng, 1996). Self-direction is a particular attitude towards the learning task, where the learner accepts responsibility for all the decisions concerned with his learning but does not necessarily undertake the implementation of these decisions (Dickinson, 1987). Holec (1981) describes this as the process or the techniques used in directing one’s own learning. Independent learning refers to learning in which the learner, in conjunction with others, can make the decisions necessary to meet the learners’ own learning needs (Dickinson, 1987). But learner autonomy is not only concerned about the decision making process, it focuses on learners’ needs and interests as well as working with a teacher/mentor. Benson (2001) suggested that there are two aspects of learner autonomy that have led to misconceptions of the concept. The first aspect is as a result of terminological and conceptual confusion within the field, and the features that autonomy shares with other related terms. The second aspect is in relation to the notion that learner autonomy somehow relinquishes the teacher’s control. Some teachers and researchers believe that autonomous
learners make teachers redundant, and that teachers’ interventions can destroy learner autonomy. In fact, there is interdependence between teachers and learners in learner autonomy.

Another misconception is that learner autonomy is synonymous with the teaching method that the “teacher does to their learners” (Little, 1991, p. 3); that is, that teachers have all the control and students are passive receivers of lessons taught. It is posited in this thesis that if learners want to become autonomous, there must be the support from their teacher. However, it does not mean that the fostering of “learner autonomy can be programmed in a series of lesson plans” (p. 3). Instead, it is a life-long process. A fourth misconception is that “learner autonomy is a simple, easily described behavior” (Little, 1991, p. 3). It is true that autonomous learners can be recognised by their behaviors, but these behaviors take numerous forms. Therefore, there are many different approaches to support learners to become autonomous such as learner metacognitive training (Wenden, 1999) or knowing and developing students learning styles (Ng & Confessore, 2010). Lastly, it is assumed that “autonomy is only achieved by certain learners” (Little, 1991, p. 4). In fact, there appear to be different degrees of learner autonomy (Nunan, 1997; Little, 1999).

In agreement with Little (1991), Esch (1997) presented three misconceptions about autonomous learning in his own way. The first is the danger of its “reduction to a set of skills” (p. 165) where “the promotion of autonomous learning is to reduce it to a series of techniques to train language learning skills leading to the display of autonomous behavior” (p. 165). This misconception is considered as the most common one in foreign language education. Esch argued that in order “to support autonomous learning, it is necessary to face the radical aspects of the concept and the question of teacher control versus learner control in particular” (p. 166). Secondly, “it is also necessary to consider that language has specific features which need to be taken into account when we talk about autonomous learning” (p. 166). By this Esch meant that language learning is different from other learning because language is used to describe and talk about our learning experiences. Thus, in order to promote autonomous learning, it is necessary for teachers to give learners a format to use their experiences as part of their learning. Lastly, autonomous learning does not mean “learning in isolation” (p. 167). This concept mirrors Little’s (1991) in that autonomous
learning focuses on individual’s interests and attributes in the interdependence with others, especially with the teacher.

The above described misconceptions can create confusion about what learner autonomy is, resulting in teachers having difficulty applying learner autonomy in their pedagogy. Learner autonomy is a relatively new concept in Vietnam, expected to be included in pedagogy; therefore, it is necessary to carry out research to understand more about the understanding and beliefs teachers have about learner autonomy and how these beliefs are applied in their teaching practice. Exploring how teachers’ beliefs and subsequent teaching practices may foster learner autonomy is discussed below.

The role of teachers’ beliefs in relation to teaching practices

Researchers (Borg, 2001; Kelchtemans, 2013; Mansour, 2013; Nespore, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Woods, 1996) have indicated that teachers’ beliefs play an important role in teaching practice. The role and importance of beliefs have been studied in several key areas of English Language Teaching (ELT). For example, Aguirre and Speer’s study (2000) analysed how teachers’ beliefs interact with teaching and learning goals and influence the moment-to-moment actions of teaching in the classroom. They emphasised that beliefs play a central role in a teachers’ selection and prioritisation of goals and actions. A person’s beliefs is defined as a proposition that is personally held with or without consciousness; this proposition has an impact on the holder’s behaviour, therefore, beliefs must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do (Borg, 2001).

Because the concept of learner autonomy is multifaceted, the current research limits its study on teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and how these beliefs foster learner autonomy in the Vietnamese educational contexts. The role of teachers’ beliefs and the relationship of their beliefs in practice will be discussed in more detail in section 2.3 of this thesis.

1.2 THE STUDY CONTEXT

The above section provides a brief view of the issues related to learner autonomy and also the need for research on teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in Vietnam. The following section describes the rationale for such research to be conducted in Vietnamese higher educational contexts. This section discusses the current Vietnamese educational
contexts in general and EFL teaching and learning in particular. The discussion aims to highlight the role of teachers in relation to developing learner autonomy in current Vietnamese tertiary education.

Traditionally, teaching and learning English in Vietnam is limited to ‘giving students a fish’ and far from ‘teaching them how to fish’; that is, the main task of the teacher is to transmit the knowledge to his/her students (Trinh, 2005) rather than encouraging students to become autonomous in their learning. Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) pointed out that teachers are traditionally considered as masters of knowledge in the classroom. Researchers (Mumphreys & Wyatt, 2014; Nguyen, Toulouw & Pilot, 2006) indicated that Vietnamese learners have been influenced by the Confucian perspective in that there are “traditional beliefs of relational hierarchy in classrooms, where the roles of teachers and learners are rooted deeply in people’s thinking” (Ho & Crookall, 1995, p. 237). In these classes, students tend to be very passive and dependent upon their teachers for learning. Students are in class to receive knowledge rather than construct it. In the classroom, the students are not allowed to confront teachers directly. This would be disrespectful and cause the teacher to lose face. Consequently, schools are formed in a structure where the authority is not shared; individuality and creativity are less encouraged (Harman & Nguyen, 2009). As a result of this system, learners tend not to be supported in developing learner autonomy during the educational process.

However, Littlewood’s (2000) study indicated that our preconceptions about Asian learners, including Vietnamese learners do not reflect their real characteristics; and that the students are not that passive and they now do not wish to be merely “obedient listeners” (p.33) but “they would like to be active and independent” (Littlewood, 2000, p. 34 ). This is clearly a new direction of thinking about how students learn and want to learn in Vietnam. In another study with 300 Vietnamese learners of English, Tomlinson and Dat (2004) reported that learners would welcome changes to the culture of their classrooms. However, the teachers in the study were largely unaware of what their students felt and thought about the methodology of their courses (Tomlinson & Dat, 2004). According to Lewis and McCook (2002), “teachers do implement new ideas at the same time as incorporating the traditional features valued in their educational systems” (p. 146). This finding is tempered by the research by Pham (2005) who found that:
Many Vietnamese teachers are conflicted, feeling that their circumstances oppose, or at least, militate against attempts to use communicative practices. For example, they have to prepare their students for the grammar-based exams, and have to finish certain content in the textbook in certain amount of time. They have classes of 60 students; many of them are more concerned about the immediate goal- to pass the exam, to get a degree, rather than a long term goal- to develop communicative competence. It is thus uncommon for teachers to take a binary approach to teaching: it is to be teaching grammar or teaching communication; one thing has to be done at the expense of the other.

(Pham, 2005, p. 337)

Pham (2008), in her study of the roles of teachers in implementing cooperative learning in Vietnam, indicated that cooperative learning has failed to make an impact on the current teaching and learning approach. The author argued that cooperative learning has failed to replace the traditional teaching and learning approach at Vietnamese higher education institutions partly because “Vietnamese teachers are not happy to transfer their roles as a knowledge transmitter to a learning facilitator as cooperative learning requires” (Pham, 2008, p. 3). Dang (2010) suggested that “being strongly considered part of the Eastern culture, teaching and learning in Vietnam is more teacher-centred” (p. 5). However, “teachers of English in Vietnam seem to have accepted that the grammar-translation method is not effective in English language teaching and learning” and that “they have begun to realise that communicative teaching approaches are what they need to implement in their teaching” (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999, p. 3) to improve students’ learning. This communicative language teaching method and student-centred approach in second language training however have not consistently been reported to be used effectively, given various situational problems such as big-size classes, a rigorous test-oriented system, and a heavy learning workload (Hayden & Lam, 2009).

While teachers seem to understand that it is now a government requirement to support students to become more active and autonomous in their learning (Pham, 2005), the current researcher found through informal talks with some teachers in Vietnam that they understood the concept of learner autonomy in a variety of ways, but not in a consistent way with research. These misconceptions about learner autonomy may have influenced their
perceptions of their roles in their class in supporting the development of learner autonomy in their students. Therefore, investigating teachers’ beliefs to understand how learner autonomy is being applied in teaching practices was deemed an appropriate research focus, exploring as whether language learners who are passive or active in class depend more on their teachers’ expectations than on perceived culturally-based learning styles (Howe, 1993; Mumphreys & Wyatt, 2014).

An important point that needs mentioning is in regard to the current situation of English language learning and teaching in Vietnam, especially, with particular reference to the problems facing teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) at higher education levels. Researchers (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999; Kam, 2002; Pham, 2005; Nguyen, 2013) indicated that English language courses in Vietnam revealed many problems. One of these problems related to the designing and development of curriculum or syllabus and teaching and learning materials and resources due to the lack of the analysis of students’ needs (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999). It appeared that “educators, including policy-makers, course-designers, and teachers assumed the language needs of students” (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999, p. 2). It is stated that a vague evaluation of the proficiency level of students was made, that is, all non-English-majored universities assumed that the first-year students had a pre-intermediate level of English language proficiency (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999). Thus, “a ‘good’ book that is available on the market” is selected to teach all students (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999, p. 2). Although the levels of English in a class may well be mixed, all students have to follow the same books, in the same way at the same pace of learning. Mixed groups of students attend large classes of normally 40-60 students (Oliver, 2004; Pham, 2009) or even 50-70 students (Kam, 2002). All students read the same books with rarely adapted changes made to the curriculum which, according to Brogan and Nguyen (1999), Dang (2006) and Trinh (2005) leads to the “low quality of English training” in Vietnam. Brogan and Nguyen (1999) stated that “courses are usually designed once, materials are usually selected and developed once, and methodologies are usually chosen once” (p. 2) and this is generally done for two main reasons. The first reason is to accommodate the teacher of English. The authors pointed out that “teachers of English in Vietnam may teach mornings, afternoons and evenings, and may have no time to listen to what the students think works well and what does not” (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999, p. 2). It is also stated that “the sharing of ideas, experiences and materials is not common amongst teachers of English in Vietnam”
and so innovation is rare. The second possible reason for low quality teaching and learning is the positive attitudes of teachers of English in Vietnam have towards imported materials (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999). The teachers in Vietnam believed that “imported materials” are suitable “for all situations” and are easy to use (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999, p. 3). It should be noted that there are few materials that are context-specific to Vietnam. It follows that then the materials used are not necessarily relevant to students’ lives and learning, which may have an effect of student engagement through traditional rote learning strategies rather than developing learner autonomy strategies. This approach to teaching and learning does little to support the development of learner autonomy in students.

In Vietnam, the Ministry of Education and Training (Moet) is the only organisation issuing curriculum for all educational systems (Nunan, 2003). Each institution then develops their own syllabus and materials, which teachers and students follow for teaching and learning in order for students to pass the exams (Pham, 2005). Generally in Vietnam, the content of learning, including objectives and activities/tasks that students undertake in class is predetermined (Dang, 2010; Nguyen, 2010). Neither the teachers nor the students have the power or freedom to make decisions about the objectives of learning (Nguyen, 2010). Because there is little scope for innovative pedagogy such as with learner autonomy, students tend to be unmotivated and passive in their learning and receive little encouragement to become autonomous learners.

Today, however, it is required that education and training must not only be able to equip students with new scientific and cultural knowledge but also develop their reasoning, creative abilities and team work skills (Moet, 2005). These requirements have pushed Vietnamese educational authorities to change their perceptions about teaching and learning philosophies (Pham, 2008). They have considered that the traditional teaching and learning approach, with its emphasis on individual achievement and transmission of information has become inadequate in supporting the development of students’ thinking and learning skills in today’s global society (Dang, 2010). Therefore, the importance of learner autonomy has been acknowledged in a new educational policy number: 43/2007/QD-BGDDT (Moet, 2007) issued by the Vietnamese government. The aim of this policy is to develop more autonomous learning with more active and responsible students. The focus of this educational policy is on developing lifelong and autonomous learners. According to this new policy, all universities
and institutions have to adapt their syllabus and teaching and learning processes to a central accreditation-based system, which includes the development of learner autonomy. It follows that then teachers must change their teaching strategies to meet the expectations of the new requirements. Students, for their part, need to become more active and responsible for their studies because they can now choose their own courses and teachers and so they must learn to manage their time and learning progression. However, how teachers perceive the issue of learner autonomy and apply it into their instructional practices remains very unclear.

The current researcher has been working as a teacher of English in Vietnam for nearly ten years. She has found that creating interesting lessons which can meet almost all students’ needs in large classes and promoting active learning in the teaching-learning process poses a great challenge for even the most experienced English teachers. Therefore, she carried out a project called “Let students take control!” which was aimed at stimulating students’ interest in English and fostering their independent learning through peer-teaching. In semester 1 in the school year 2008-2009, her teaching focused on grammar and vocabulary as test-oriented pedagogy. She thought if she followed the same way of teaching as she had done previously, that is, she designed the lessons including choosing activities and materials, it would take her a lot of time and it was possible that the class would have been very boring for students with little effective learning occurring. Therefore, she decided to change the program and the teaching-learning methods to a more student-centred approach, which included scope for students to become autonomous learners. There were six units in the semester; each unit contained a grammar point and topic. At the beginning of the course, she asked students to form 6 groups and each group chose a unit to teach to their peers according to the time-table of the class. The teaching groups decided all the objectives of the lesson, the activities, and materials to teach their own lesson. The researcher acted as a facilitator in the class. She observed that the class atmosphere was extremely exciting for her as a teacher and for the students. The students were totally engaged in the lessons and enjoyed the activities carried out by their classmates. All students were engaged in the activities. The project’s results indicated that when she (the teacher) gave students more of a chance to be involved in class decision making, they were more active and motivated to learn, which lead to a better and higher quality of teaching and learning process. This drove her interest to study more about learner autonomy and how to adopt this concept more broadly into the Vietnamese context. As a starting point, the current research argues that in order to understand how learner
autonomy can be applied more generally in Vietnamese pedagogy, teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy needed to be investigated in the Vietnamese educational context.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Despite the fact that learner autonomy is gaining momentum as an educational phenomenon and various research has sought to create solutions for fostering learner autonomy in Asian countries, there is very little research on how teachers’ beliefs are enacted in teaching practices. The current research makes a contribution to understanding how teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy are manifested into teaching practices in teaching-learning situations in Vietnam. Thus, the current research adds new understandings of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy to the growing, yet limited literature, and provides an opportunity for teachers, policy-makers and the wider community to gain insight into this phenomenon. The research contributes to formulating future interventions to foster or change attitudes towards learner autonomy for school officials who can assist with intervention and reforming programs in Vietnam.

Moreover since past research has mainly focused on this issue using a survey to understand teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy, the present study expanded the existing methods to include a mixed-method case study approach. This approach contributed to a better understanding and more effective and in-depth exploration of learner autonomy in Vietnam.

1.4 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the current study was to explore EFL teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and how these beliefs affect their actual instructional practice. Social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) is the theoretical lens through which the issues on learner autonomy were examined and reported in this thesis. This theory was used because of the interactive nature of learner autonomy within a specific social setting. In particular the current research explored three aspects of learner autonomy: the teachers’ perceptions of the learner as being autonomous and therefore their beliefs about learner autonomy, the role of the teacher as facilitator of learner autonomy and the association of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and their teaching practices to foster learner autonomy. As described earlier in this chapter, the current research defines learner autonomy as learner’ willingness and
ability to take responsibility, to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate his/her learning with tasks that are constructed in negotiation with and support from the teacher. For teachers, helping students develop learner autonomy requires attention paid to the negotiation and support the students in their learning. A person’s belief is defined as a proposition that is personally held with or without consciousness; this proposition has an impact on the holder’s behavior, therefore, beliefs must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do. The current research employed the model of ‘triadic reciprocality’ (Bandura, 1986) to explore the relationships and the translations of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy into their actual teaching practice (behaviour) in the Vietnamese educational context (environment). In essence, triadic reciprocality refers to the mutual actions between causal factors of teachers’ beliefs, teaching practice and the teaching-learning environment. In this model, one factor does not predominate over the others. Instead the relationships will vary according to different teaching situations. For example, teachers’ beliefs may not always be enacted in their teaching practice if they are not confident in their abilities to change their practice. Alternatively, the environment may impact on how effectively teachers are able to enact their teaching beliefs. The triadic reciprocity model is explained further in Section 2.6.3 of this thesis.

The current research, exploratory by nature, examines the research question:

*What is the association between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and teachers’ behaviours in fostering learner autonomy in teaching English as a foreign language at universities in Vietnam?*

This overarching question is divided into three sub-questions:

1. *What are Vietnamese EFL teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy?*
2. *What are the teachers’ actual teaching practices regarding learner autonomy?*
3. *What is the association between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and teachers’ actual teaching practice?*

The current study used a mixed-method approach, utilising multiple sources of data including survey (in Phase 1 of the research), and interviews and observations (in Phase 2 of the research). The goal of using both quantitative data and qualitative data was to draw on the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of an individual method in a single research study, to understand phenomenon of learner autonomy more fully, as well as to generate deeper and
broader insights and to develop important knowledge claims that respect a wider range of interests and perspectives about learner autonomy (Cresswell, 2005). Chapter 3 of the thesis provides a detailed description of the approach and methods undertaken in the study.

1.5 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

The thesis consists of 6 chapters. Chapter One - Introduction presents the background, the context, the aims and purposes of the research, the scope and the thesis outline. Chapter Two, provides a thorough review of the research and literature about teachers’ beliefs and practices in relation to learner autonomy and provides an argument to support the study focus of learner autonomy, learner autonomy in foreign language learning, teacher autonomy, teachers’ beliefs in language learning, and the relationships between teachers’ beliefs and learner autonomy as it is practiced in the classroom. Chapter Three outlines the design and methodology of the research. Chapter Four details the results of the study in relation to teachers’ beliefs and these effects on the development of learner autonomy in their classrooms. Chapter Five contains a full discussion, interpretation and evaluation of the results with reference to the literature. The final chapter - Chapter Six contains the conclusions and limitations of the research, and provides recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature on topics relating to learner autonomy, teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and how teachers’ beliefs are manifest in classroom practices to support learner autonomy. The chapter begins with a comprehensive definition of learner autonomy (Section 2.1) which outlines the nature of learner autonomy, as well as the characteristics of autonomous learners and autonomous learning. Following is a description of the different approaches and perspectives to foster and develop learner autonomy in the world and, in particular, Asia (Section 2.2). This is followed by a discussion about the application of learner autonomy in Vietnam which highlights the role of teacher in fostering learner autonomy (Section 2.3). The subsequent section is devoted to the discussion of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy. A working definition of beliefs is provided, which outlines the roles of beliefs in teaching in general and fostering learner autonomy in particular (Section 2.4). The final section (Section 2.5) provides a discussion of teaching behaviours in relation to fostering learner autonomy to set up the research, which explores the association between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and their teaching practices to foster learner autonomy.

2.1 Definitions of Learner Autonomy

As indicated in Chapter 1, a number of definitions of learner autonomy exist in education generally and in second language learning in particular. This section describes the different terms employed in previous research in the field. Holec’s (1981) seminal work provided a definition of learner autonomy as the “ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3). He stated that being an autonomous learner means that one is able:

\[
\textit{to have, and to hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e. determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedures of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.); evaluating what has been acquired.}
\]

(Holec, 1981, p. 3)
This broad definition of learner autonomy has been the one most cited in the research (Benson, 2007). There are four characteristics in Holec’s (1981) definition. First, autonomy is an “ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3) which means learner autonomy is an attribute of learner, not the process. Second, this attribute is not innate or in-born but necessarily is acquired through systematic and purposeful learning process. Third, it describes a potential capacity to act in a learning situation, and not the actual behaviour of an individual in that situation. In other words, learner autonomy cannot be identified as one single simple behavior in a particular learning situation. The fourth feature is related to learners’ ability to take control of their learning by becoming responsible for the decisions made in all the aspects of the learning process. This definition highlights ‘responsibility’ and ‘capacity’ as key features of learner autonomy. From this broad definition, many definitions of learner autonomy have followed.

In other definitions of learner autonomy, the words ‘ability’ and ‘take charge of’ have often been replaced by ‘capacity’ and ‘take responsibility for’ respectively (Dang, 2012). For example, Little (1991) conceptualised autonomy as ‘a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action’ (p. 4). In this definition, Little placed psychology at the heart of learner autonomy. This psychological approach raised questions about what the most important components of autonomy in language learning were. It could be argued that learner responsibility means that learners are aware of their own roles, which may have led to the metacognitive-focused definitions. For example, Wenden (1991) indicated the importance of metacognitive awareness and learners’ attitudes when she claimed that true learner autonomy refers to how students reflect on their learning and how they realise that they have effective learning opportunities. Dam (1995, 2008) defined autonomous learners as people who are able to take charge of their learning, act independently, and are motivated in the learning process. In another example, Littlewood (1996) described the notion of autonomy as “learners’ ability and willingness to make choices independently” (p. 427). He argued that “this capacity depends on two main components: ability and willingness” (p. 428). These two components are interdependent and are divided into subcomponents. According to Littlewood (1996) ability depends on knowledge about the alternative choices and skills available for carrying out appropriate choices. Willingness depends on the motivation and confidence a person must have to take responsibility for necessary choices. In order to obtain success in acting autonomously,
Littlewood suggested that a person needs to have four subcomponents: knowledge, skills, motivation, and confidence. He suggested that these components be honored in the development of learner autonomy. Interestingly, Benson (1997) took the political view of learner autonomy and defined it as learner’s rights. These various word substitutions seem to be a matter of linguistics, which has led to learner autonomy being understood and translated into practice in various ways. Oxford (2003) has suggested that “consideration of all relevant perspectives is likely to provide a stronger, richer understanding of learner autonomy” (p. 81) suggesting that there may be no one definition of learner autonomy as such but that there is an agreement of what learner autonomy means. The following section examines the perspectives that researchers have employed to explore learner autonomy.

Benson (1997) attempted to systemise learner autonomy by introducing the idea of different versions or perspectives of representing the idea of learner autonomy including: technical, psychological, and political, which now seems to be a standard model for any discussion about learner autonomy. The technical perspective emphasises the situational conditions under which learner autonomy may develop. “Research adopting this perspective values attributes from the learning environment” (Benson, 1997, p. 19). Most of the studies (Christopher & Ho, 1996; Gardner & Miller, 1999, 2011; Milton, 1997; Morrison, 2008; Sturtridge, 1997) adopting this perspective have been conducted in self-access learning centres where authentic materials and personalised learning activities can foster learner autonomy. With its emphasis on external conditions, this perspective has its own value in that it is possible to have a full understanding of various autonomy factors in a particular learning situation. However, if a researcher took only a technical perspective on autonomy, it would be not complete as Oxford (2003) contended that “without psychology, the technical perspective would be inert” (p. 82).

With the psychological perspective, some researchers (Benson, 2001, 2007; Holec, 1981; Little, 1995) take learners’ ‘ability’ or ‘capacity’ into account. Little’s (1995) definition involves an element of awareness (cognitive factor) in that capacity. Benson (2001) considered learner autonomy as a capacity consisting of two interrelated elements, namely ‘behavioral’ and ‘(meta) cognitive’. These two elements allow learners to ‘initiate, monitor, and evaluate’ their learning processes. This perspective fits closely with Oxford’s (2003) who stated that “the psychological perspective examines mental and emotional characteristics of
learners who are viewed as individuals or members of a sociocultural group” (p. 83). Psychological research indicates that autonomous learners have characteristics such as: high motivation, self-efficacy and a sense of agency, positive attitudes, a need for achievement, and a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Benson, 2007). In the psychological view, context is often referred to as “the second versus foreign language environment, rather than the details of the immediate setting” (Oxford, 2003, p. 83). A second language is learnt by daily communication (see for example, Little, 1999) while a foreign language is learnt in an environment where it is not the everyday context of the majority’s communication (Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

Unlike the psychological perspective, the sociocultural perspective emphasises social interaction as a major part of cognitive and language development (Benson, 2007). Under a sociocultural perspective (Benson, 2007), learner autonomy is constructed during one’s negotiation with his/her living environment. That is, this perspective lays the emphasis on the interactions between learners and their environment. Being a member of a society, an individual needs to deal with different matters, people, and relationships, and learner autonomy is acquired during the execution of these processes. This perspective acknowledges the impact of both personal and situational attributes in forming and developing learner autonomy. Teachers adopting this perspective often provide learners with more contextual choices, negotiation, and interactive activities (see Benson & Chik & Lim, 2003; Dang, 2010; Ho & Crookal, 1995). Finally, the political-critical perspective involves issues of power, access, and ideology. Pennycook’s (1997) work illustrates this perspective, where context refers to ideologies and attitudes found in specific locations, situations, groups (related to age, gender, religion, and culture), institutions, and socioeconomic levels. These various perspectives of learner autonomy will be explored further in section 2.3.

The difficulty of defining learner autonomy in terms of its most important components has also been expressed by two assumptions: the “degrees of learner autonomy” and the “behaviours of autonomous learners” (Nunan, 1997, p. 13). A number of researchers (Benson, 2001; Nunan, 1997; Littlewood, 1999) have attempted to define the notion that autonomy is a matter of degree. Nunan (1997) argued that “autonomy is not an absolute concept” (p. 193). He developed a model of five levels of learner actions: “awareness, involvement, intervention, creation, and transcendence” (p. 195). At the awareness level, for
example, learners would be “made aware of the pedagogical goals and contents of the materials”, “identify strategy implication of pedagogical tasks”, and “identify their own learning styles” (p. 196). At the other end of the spectrum, in the transcendence level, “learners would make links between the content learnt in the classroom and the world beyond” and “become teachers and researchers” (p. 200). Nunan (1997) contended that “most learners do not come into the learning situation with the knowledge and skills to determine content and learning processes which will enable them to reach their objectives in learning another language” (p. 201) and that “fully autonomous learners are a rarity” (p. 201). Nunan (1997) suggested that teachers need to encourage learners to become autonomous and, for the purpose of the current research, this best takes place in the language classroom.

Littlewood (1999) classified learner autonomy into two levels: proactive autonomy and reactive autonomy. Proactive autonomy is where learners are able to plan, monitor, and access their learning. In this way, learners establish their own “personal learning agenda” and their own “directions for learning” (p. 75). This level of autonomy is often seen as the autonomy generally attributed to students in Western cultures, such as Australia. However, in education in general and in language education in particular, Littlewood argued that it is necessary to mention and pay attention to the second level called “reactive autonomy” (p. 75). Reactive autonomy is “the kind of autonomy which does not create its own directions, but once direction has been initiated enables learners to organise their resources autonomously to reach their goal” (p. 75). Reactive autonomy is seen as a lower order autonomy than proactive and is considered a preliminary step towards proactive autonomy. For instance, if a learner is in a state of reactive autonomy, s/he will learn vocabulary without being pushed and may volunteer to form a reading group to deal with assignments. It can be inferred that with reactive autonomy the level of decision making in class merely complements rather than challenges the traditional structures of knowledge and authority. This classification is worth attention in Asian educational contexts where the concept of learner autonomy is only recently being explored and where one must consider cultural and social constraints that are different to those of Western cultures (Benson, 2000; Little, 1997; Littlewood, 1999; Smith, 2008). It is not known at present how Vietnamese teachers understand the concept of learner autonomy but as it is now mandated by government to be included in pedagogy it is important to understand what teachers understand about the notion
of learner autonomy in education focused on English language learning and how this understanding is applied in their teaching practices.

The above models imply a possible progression from a ‘lower’ level to ‘higher’ levels of autonomy. However, one problem with such models is the assumption that the relationship between the development of autonomy and language proficiency is unproblematic. Kumaravadivelu (2003, p. 144) argued that “it would be a mistake to try to correlate the initial, intermediary, and advanced stages of autonomy…with the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of language proficiency”, because the stages of autonomy depend more on the linguistics and communicative demands of particular tasks. However, in one study, Nguyen (2010) examined the relationship between autonomy and language proficiency at a university in Vietnam and found a positive relationship between the two. In the current research, the study focuses on fostering learner autonomy in foreign language learning in Vietnam, where the learners’ level of English is quite mixed. Additionally, these students are generally seen as ‘passive learners’ (Dang, 2010). Therefore, it is important to heed Nunan’s (1997) ideas about learner autonomy to explore the Vietnamese educational context for developing learner autonomy.

Although there are different definitions of learner autonomy in the world, Sinclair (2000) pointed out some common characteristics of learner autonomy which are generally agreed. These include that autonomy is a construct of capacity which is not inborn; autonomy consists of learners’ willingness to be responsible for their own learning; there are degrees of autonomy which are unstable and changeable; autonomy can occur both inside and outside the classroom; autonomy has a social as well as an individual dimension; and that promotion of autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process.

(Sinclair, 2000, p. 5)

These characteristics will be considered in the framework of the current research.

As indicated above, although there seems to be no first indication of when the term, learner autonomy, was first used, Holec’s (1981) seminal work provided a beginning point for others to consider in defining learner autonomy. Similarly, there appears to be no particular theory from which learner autonomy was derived. As stated earlier in this thesis, the researcher contends that the facilitation of learner autonomy is contingent upon teachers’
beliefs about the construct and this seems best embedded in a social-constructivist theory. According to this perspective, social interaction is believed to shape individual development and learning (Vygotsky, 1978). The emphasis that Vygotsky (1978) placed on the role of social interaction in constructing knowledge is central to many forms of constructivism. His perspective is called social constructivism. In recent years, social constructivism has been increasingly applied to learning and teaching with a greater focus on learners (Woolfolk, 2004). Rather than being interested in how knowledge is acquired, the focus is on how knowledge is constructed (Von Glasersfeld, 1995; 2005; Woolfolk, 2004). Although researchers may approach issues and factors affecting learning and learners differently, the theories that umbrella their research is constructivism (Von Glasersfeld, 2005; Woolfolk, 2004).

In this research, learner autonomy is defined as learner’ willingness and ability to take responsibility, to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate his/her learning with tasks that are constructed in negotiation with and support from the teacher. For teachers, helping students develop learner autonomy requires attention paid to the negotiation and support their students. In order to foster learner autonomy, the autonomous learners must be willing to be involved in their learning. This means that they must be motivated and active towards their studies. As Dam (1995) identified, an autonomous learner as:

an active participant in the social processes of classroom learning….An active interpreter of new information in terms of what s/he already and uniquely knows…knows how to learn and can use this knowledge in any learning situation s/he may encounter at any stage in his/her life (p. 102).

However, in order to be willing to learn, it is important for learners to understand the tasks they have been given to do, which calls on the importance of the teacher in the process. Second, when they are willing to learn, it is important to know how to learn and how to take the responsibility. Wenden (1991) emphasised the importance of learner training in how to learn, suggesting that even ‘successful’, ‘expert’ or ‘intelligent’ learners have learned how to become autonomous. All learners have to acquire effective learning strategies, knowledge about learning, attitudes that enable them to use their skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher. And when they can do this, they are autonomous learners. Put another way, if learners are willing to learn and have strategies to take control, they will become autonomous. Little (1995) stated that autonomous learners are
motivated learners. Motivated autonomous learners are able to apply their knowledge and abilities further. In the context of English language learning, autonomous learners can freely apply their language and skills outside the immediate context of learning.

Understanding the characteristics of students who are autonomous in their learning is important; however, it is equally important to understand how teachers can foster learner autonomy in their classrooms. The following section describes various approaches to fostering learner autonomy that have occurred globally. This section will be followed by a discussion on the factors that affect the development of learner autonomy in Vietnamese educational contexts, which is the focus for the current research.

2.2 APPOACHES TO FOSTERING LEARNER AUTONOMY

In formal education, the development of learner autonomy is important. However, Benson (2003) noted that “autonomy can be fostered, but not taught” (p. 290). This section provides a discussion of six approaches to fostering learner autonomy (Benson, 2001; Little, 2004) with the description and emphasis of each approach and the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. The discussion of this section is to highlight the necessity for understanding learner autonomy with a foremost focus on the teacher’s role in the process of its facilitation.

2.2.1 Resource-based approach

The resource-based approach places a focus on the provision learners with opportunities and situations such as materials and resources to foster learner autonomy (Benson, 2013; Nguyen, 2010). Gardner and Miller (2011) assumed that the “major goal of the promotion of self-access learning is the fostering of autonomous learning” (p. 78). In other words, with the provision of opportunities which involve self-access or self-regulation with resources and counselling for learning, learners will be able to direct their learning through “the learner’s interaction with learning resources” (Benson, 2001, p. 113). For example, Gardner and Miller (1999) saw self-access centres as a “way of encouraging learners to move from teacher dependence towards autonomy” (p. 8). The centre provides materials which are designed for students to self-access and use in their learning and, therefore, foster independence rather than depending on the teacher for continual direction (Chung, 2013; Esch, 1997; Gardner & Miller, 1997, 2011; Littlejohn, 1997; Sheerin, 1997).
As the focus in language learning has moved from teacher-centred to more learner-centred, “self-access language learning has emerged as a complement to the more traditional face-to-face learning model, with self-access centres now operating in many parts of the worlds” (Morrison, 2008, p. 123).

In his study, Morrison (2008) interviewed sixteen participants to respond to the question “What is a self-access centre?” The data analysis identified that self-access centres play important roles in language learning at higher education level because it helps foster language learning as well as independent learning. He also identified criticisms or constraints to self-access centres regarding fostering learner autonomy, including the profile of the learners, the resources and materials in the centre, the learning environment of the school or institution which self-access centre operates. In particular, in relation to learner profile, he mentioned that learners need to be assessed to know their needs, and need training to have skills and strategies to be able to use self-access centres effectively. The quality and availability of the centre’s resources and materials raises significant concerns for the effectiveness of the self-access centres. In other words, the criteria for suitability of the materials and how to help learners access the resources need to be carefully considered. He concluded that in order to have self-access centres run effectively and help develop independent learning, there must be a clear understanding of how self-access centres work.

Within this approach, Cranker and Servains (2013) described a strategy to solve the challenges related to the accessibility of materials and the fostering of autonomy in self-access centres (SALC), that is, they developed IEP system (Individualised Education Plan). This system includes web-based database for searching self-access learning materials and linking the materials with teaching and learning curriculum; and learner surveys. This system was run at the University of Delaware self-access learning centre. The study indicated that through the anecdotal reporting and observation, it was found that the system works well to some degree, especially in “encouraging more self-directed behaviours and use of the SALC for its intended purposes” (p. 111) and it links the classroom to the self-access centre. It was indicated that, in order to achieve positive results, teachers play important roles in helping learners be aware of their roles and how to use the system effectively.

In another study, Tassinari (2012) described a model to help learners and advisors assess and evaluate learners’ competences for autonomy. The model includes dynamic
components such as “learners’ competencies, skills, choices, and decision-making process, and account for their mutual relationship” (p. 28). For each component, the researcher developed descriptors in form of statements, which are intended to “serve as a tool for raising learners’ (and advisors’) awareness of what could be worth focusing on in autonomous learning processes” (p. 31). However, it is argued that the evaluation process using this model as a basis should be integrated within a pedagogical dialogue between learners and peers or advisors. The role of the advisor should be to train the learners and to create the environments or opportunities for their learners.

Thus, even in self-access centres where the interaction between the teacher and the learner is not really focused, the role of the teacher is important in creating opportunities and supporting their students in using self-access centres and in developing independent learning and subsequently, learner autonomy. However, utilising self-access centres is only one form of teacher-learner involvement in supporting learner autonomy. The following section describes the technology-based approach as an alternative to self-access centres.

2.2.2 Technology-based approach

The typical forms of this approach are computer-assisted language learning (CALL) (Aston, 1997; Klaus, 2012; Milton, 1997) and e-tandem learning (Little, 2001) and computer mediated communication (CMC) (Ankan & Bakla, 2011; Dang & Robertson, 2010; Hamilton, 2013). For example, Dang and Robertson (2010) explored the relationship as well as the impact of computer technology on learner autonomy. In this study, the researchers viewed learner autonomy in terms of sociocultural perspectives which emphasise the interactions between learners and their environment. The study showed a strong association between CMC (computer mediated communication or online technology) and learner autonomy. These findings have suggested that EFL educators need to take advantage of students’ social e-habits for educational purposes and confirmed that this approach may be a viable option for Vietnamese students to be trained to use in order to become autonomous learners.

In another example, Ankan and Bakla (2011) studied the use of blogs as a way to foster learner autonomy. From the features of learner autonomy which involves four cornerstones: decision-making, independent action, critical reflection and detachment, they argued for the use of blogs to achieve these. Blogs are one of the new virtual settings. Whatever learners
write on their blogs can be read by others. Additionally, young learners are motivated to use blogs because they provide a free and easy writing environment. Blogs can help learners develop their skills such as being “able to make decision on one’s own, be less teacher-dependent, and be involved in critical reflection” (p. 241). The authors tested the use of blogs on 17 EFL students and found that although the students had the chance to make decisions and they had positive attitudes towards using blogs, most of the learners faced the difficulties coming from the use of technology and their language proficiency. The authors emphasised that the “teacher should endeavour to give students decision-making rights” and that by “being guided by a knowledgeable teacher, learners can study a second language autonomously” (p. 241). Again, it is learnt from this study that much emphasis on the important role of the teacher in general and teacher’s knowledge and beliefs in particular to foster learner autonomy. That is, within this approach teachers may have new roles as facilitators, advisors or helpers to help their students overcome the difficulties in using blogs as a way to foster learner autonomy.

2.2.3 Curriculum-based approach

The third approach to foster learner autonomy is the curriculum-based approach. This approach emphasises the negotiation between teacher and learners in the learning content. This approach is characterised by developing learner involvement in decision making (Cotterall, 2000; Dickinson, 1995; Esch, 1996). Within the curriculum-based approach, researchers (Chan, 2001; Yildirim, 2008; Sakai, Takagi & Chu, 2010) focused their research on learners’ responsibilities, attitudes, and beliefs about learning processes.

Cotterall (2000) argued that fostering learner autonomy is “an important and appropriate goal in language course design” (p. 109). The study presented five principles for designing language courses in order to enhance learner autonomy and language proficiency. The five principles which emerged from the course design process relate to learner goals, the language learning process, tasks, learner strategies and reflection on learning. The key underlying concern in all five principles is to find ways of supporting the transfer of responsibility from teacher to learner. The author indicated that in order to foster learner autonomy, in each principle, the key issue that a designer must take into consideration is to make learners aware of the need for identifying goals, learning options, and strategies. Thus, the potential for learner autonomy increases as an individual’s learning awareness grows.
Teachers’ concerns are to make learners aware of all the issues related to curriculum design and learning process.

In another study, Reinders and Balcikanli (2011) argued that learners need explicit instructions to be responsible for all aspects of their learning in the class. The study addressed the research problem on how textbooks can help encourage learner autonomy in the classroom because textbooks play important roles in teaching and learning process and they can help provide students with multiple choices about what to learn or opportunities to evaluate or reflect their learning in the learning process. The researchers utilised an evaluative framework to assess five common English textbooks, including Face to Face, New Cutting Edge, New Opportunities, The interchange Series, and New Headway which are seen as common and available in Turkish education context. It is found that “the language textbooks… do not explicitly encourage learner autonomy” (p. 269), that is, they do little to foster learner autonomy because they did not provide many opportunities for learner “to select their own learning strategies and provide practical tips around this” (p. 269). The study also found that in some aspects, some of the studied textbooks offered some opportunities for the students to monitor their learning process by raising some questions which are seen as “strictly involve monitoring progress” but “more about memorisation” (p. 270). It means that even in some cases, when textbooks do encourage learner autonomy, they offered “limited opportunity for practice to students” (p. 265). It is recommended that teachers play important roles in adapting textbooks to foster learner autonomy in their own class. Especially, in an educational contexts where there is a limited sources of teaching and learning materials or where the traditional approaches to teaching and learning are common, the teachers should be aware of the evaluation of textbooks they use and not to be dependent totally on textbooks in their teaching, otherwise, there would be lack of evidences of learner autonomy in their class.

It can be believed that, within this approach, teachers still play an important role in fostering learner autonomy. Teachers can support by adopting and adapting their teaching or particularly teaching materials to make students aware of their learning goals, and learning processes. The assumption within this approach is that when teachers and students understand the fundamentals of learner autonomy, they can negotiate and adapt to foster learner autonomy in their contexts. This indicates that teachers’ concern lies in their roles as facilitators to support their learners.
2.2.4 Classroom-based approach

Researchers within a classroom-based approach believe that learner autonomy can be fostered through cooperative learning within classroom contexts, that is, learners are able to be responsible for their learning via working with their peers or teachers (Benson, 2001). This approach emphasises that teachers should negotiate control and responsibility with their learners in the setting of goals, the learning process and determining evaluation and assessments (Nguyen, 2010). For example, Miller and Ng (1996) studied peer assessment as one way to get students involved in their own learning to develop learner autonomy. The purpose of this study was to “turn passive recipients into active participants in a language program” (p. 134). There are some benefits of peer assessment: students may perceive that they can get fairer assessment from peers than with traditional assessment; peer assessment can improve students’ understanding and attitudes towards assessment; and/or students may become more self-regulated as the result of participating in peer assessment activities. Studies show that peer assessment does lead to positive results in terms of autonomy development. It is found that “under certain circumstances language students are able to make a realistic assessment of each other’s’ oral language ability” (p. 142). However, Miller and Ng (1996) indicated that “students should be given some assistance in preparing their tests” (p. 142). It is suggested here that teachers have an important role to support and train learners to be able to assess their peers and to accept assessment from their peers.

Researchers (Little, 2009a, 2009b; Mahdavinia & Ahmadi, 2011) studied the use of portfolios in assessment as an approach to fostering learner autonomy. The authors advocated portfolio assessment as an alternative method of assessment to the traditional methods called the “one-shot exam” (Mahdavinia & Ahmadi, 2011, p. 77). This traditional kind of exam has two problems: it can be an unreliable indicator of student learning and it encourages memorisation and rote learning. Portfolio assessment involves the teaching learning process, supportive feedback, fostering meaningful learning, and students’ own participation. Portfolios are actually composed of two major components, the process and the product. Portfolios provide authentic evidence for evaluating language learning. The findings of Mahdavinia and Ahmadi’s (2011) research showed that the use of portfolios provided several benefits to the students that included: “self-directed learning, improvement in self-confidence, development of self-assessment skills, a stress-free class, and a friendly
relationship between the teacher and students” (p. 87). The study indicated that it is important for the teacher to recognise the benefits of portfolio assessment in self-directed learning and use it in their class because one of the key arguments for self-assessment is that it provides an effective means of developing critical self-awareness. A resulting advantage of this is that learners are better able to set realistic goals and direct their own learning. Moreover, by definition of learner autonomy, learners need to be involved in all the process of learning, including the process of evaluation.

Teachers’ concern about the classroom-based approach is acknowledged for two major reasons. First, training students to be autonomous is necessary since self-assessment depends on a complex set of skills (Bullock, 2010) and teachers must be aware and prepared to commit to such training for learner autonomy to develop. Second, teachers may be challenged by the implementation of strategies that lead to learner autonomy if they are not committed to the concept of learner autonomy or even understand the concept. Bullock (2010) also stressed the need for self-assessment to be practical in terms of time and resources in the classroom-based approach. For example, the teacher needs to integrate self-assessment and peer-assessment into everyday classroom activities. It is clear that the teacher needs to be aware of the benefits of self-assessment and peer-assessment he/she can give control over to the students but this may not always be the case in Vietnamese classrooms.

2.2.5 Learner-based approach

The research within learner-based approach places a focus on training learners to develop learning skills and strategies, for example, training learners’ metacognitive knowledge and skills in order to develop learner autonomy (Benson, 2001, 2013; Dislen, 2011; Ng & Confessore, 2010; Yu, 2006) and motivation (Spratt, Humphreys & Chan, 2002; Ushioda, 2011).

In her study, Ushioda (2011) concluded that “…why autonomy? Not because we want to motivate our students and share their identities in predetermined ways, but because we want them to fulfill their potential to be the persons they want to become and do the things they value in a healthy way” (p. 230). Researchers in the field of learner autonomy in language learning agree that autonomous learners are motivated learners. However, Spratt, Humphreys and Chan (2002) reported that the mutual relationship between motivation and learner autonomy has been a controversial issue, the controversy being on which comes first?
It is found that this relationship “could be dynamic and operate in different directions depending on the kind of motivation involved”. They concluded that “motivation is the key factor that influences the extent to which learners are ready to learn autonomously, and that teachers might therefore endeavor to ensure motivation before they train students to become autonomous” (p. 245). Within this approach, Yu (2006) described three integrated factors including motivation, learners’ meta-cognitive knowledge, and the learning environment as influencing learner autonomy in an Asian context- Chinese EFL context. Yu stated that learner autonomy depended on teacher autonomy. Her study indicated that there is a necessity for the teachers to be aware of the three factors: motivation, meta-cognition and learning environment in helping students develop learner autonomy.

Ng and Confessore (2010) explored the relationship of multiple learning styles to levels of learner autonomy in Malaysia. This quantitative study investigated the relationship between six learning styles and learner autonomy. The six learning styles were identified to be avoidant, collaborative, competitive, dependent, independent, and participant. The study found that there is a close link between the number of learning styles and learner autonomy. In particular, “autonomous learners were linked to five learning styles: collaborative, competitive, dependent, independent, and participant” (p. 7). The study results also showed that “those learners who were flexible in using different learning styles according to their needs and in understanding how this kind of adaptation fits particular situations were found to be more autonomous” (p. 10). Therefore, it is vital to take into consideration the diversity of learning style preferences when developing learning activities. However, the study focused on distance learners in language learning in Malaysia. It did not take into account the in-classroom language learning.

The objectives of Sakai, Takagi and Chu’s research (2010) was to explore “students’ current wishes for learner autonomy and teachers’ implementing activities to correspond to student needs in order to promote learner autonomy” (p. 12). This study attempted to discover how gender difference influences learner autonomy. This study was based on the results of their first (previous) study in 2006 with 107 students in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. The first study found that the students were reluctant to be involved in class management and, consequently, reluctant to develop autonomous behaviours. The purpose of the more recent study (2010) was to further explore the reasons for this reluctance. The follow-up research
found two reasons. First of all, the students just wanted to be involved in certain tasks in
decision making such as ‘setting goals and evaluating the lessons’. However, they found it
difficult to do these tasks confidently because they were not trained with meta-cognitive
skills. This study indicated that it was the teachers’ role to train the students in developing
these skills. Sakai et al. suggested that it is teaching strategies that must change in order to
promote learner autonomy for these students.

In short, within a learner-based approach, researchers have focused on learners’
characteristics in relation to autonomous learners. The study results have indicated the
importance of learners or students’ awareness of their roles and learning process which can
be achieved by the support of teachers.

2.2.6 Teacher-based approaches

The teacher-based approaches place the focus on teacher autonomy, teacher education,
and teacher’s role as facilitator (Benson, 2001; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Feryok, 2013). The
assumption of this approach is that the beliefs and perceptions teachers hold have great
influence on their commitment in the implementation of learner autonomy in the classroom
(Aoki, 2008; Borg &Al-Busaidi, 2012; Raya & Sircu, 2013). It is purported that there is a
‘symbolic’ relationship between learner autonomy and teacher autonomy, but that the
promotion of learner autonomy depends on the promotion of teacher autonomy (Benson,
(1995) argued that “while learning strategies and learner training can play an important
supporting role in the development of learner autonomy, the decisive factor will always be
the nature of the pedagogical dialogue” (p. 175). In addition to this, since “learning arises
from interaction, and interaction is characterised by interdependence between the teacher and
learners, the development of autonomy in learners presupposes the development of autonomy
in teachers” (p.175). In other words, there is interdependence between teacher autonomy and
learner autonomy in fostering learner autonomy.

However, within this approach, Aoki (2008) contended that teacher autonomy does not
imply any relevance to teacher’s capacity to implement learner autonomy but it relates
instead to the practice of teachers in the classroom. She put emphasis on the importance of
the ‘what and how’ teachers should do to foster learner autonomy. In another study, Feryok
(2013) studied the role of a Japanese EFL teacher plays in fostering learner autonomy at a
higher education institution. She found that the case study teacher understand learner autonomy as “students accountability for their own learning” (p. 213) and in order to foster learner autonomy, the teacher tried to handle over management of classroom activities for his students. In particular, the teacher organized a set of routines that governed the structure of ever lesson. These routines will help the students have multiple choices in different kinds of activities in his class to take control of all aspects of the learning process. She implied that “teacher autonomy was the foundation on which the teacher’s cognition and practice were built” (p. 213). Lesson can be learnt from this research is that in order to foster learner autonomy in language learning, teacher must be knowledgeable about learner autonomy first.

The research within this approach has focused on the definitions and principles of teacher autonomy. Little focus is given on the how teacher’s perception and beliefs affect learner autonomy. Therefore, the current study focuses on this gap in the literature on learner autonomy. The review of the six approaches to foster learner autonomy confirms the need for more in-depth research on the role of teachers as one of the foremost and effective factors in fostering learner autonomy.

2.3 FOSTERING LEARNER AUTONOMY IN VIETNAMESE CONTEXTS

Since the context of this study is in Vietnam, it is necessary to briefly address relevant literature on typical characteristics that have influence on fostering learner autonomy in Asia in general, and then Vietnam specifically.

2.3.1 Fostering learner autonomy in Asian contexts

There has been a trend in the recent literature to explore the idea of autonomy among students from China (Chang, 2007; Fumin & Li, 2012; Yu, 2006), Hong Kong (Chan, 2003; Ho & Crookall, 1995; Littlewood, 1999), Japan (Aoki, 2008; Nakata, 2011; Sakai, Takagi, & Chu, 2010), Turkey (Balcikanli, 2010; Yildirim, 2008), Malaysia (Januin, 2007; Ng. & Confessore, 2010), and Vietnam (Dang, 2010; Humphreys & Wyatt, 2014; Le, 2013; Nguyen, 2010; Nguyen & Gu, 2012; Trinh, 2005). The previous studies in Asia describe different approaches to fostering learner autonomy and many of them have been cited earlier in this thesis, particularly in the section on the learner-based approach to learner autonomy. Although the findings of these studies are mixed, they do show that many Asian students
value freedom in language learning. However, there are some concerns about applying learner autonomy in Asian education as will be discussed further below.

Some researchers (Benson, Chik, & Lim, 2003; Dang, 2010; Dardjowidjojo, 2001; Ho & Crookall, 1995; Littlewood, 1999) have concerns about the application of learner autonomy in an Asian context since the term learner autonomy is somewhat contradictory to “the traditional beliefs of relational hierarchy in Asia” (p.237) where learners respect the teacher as an authority figure who is in charge. In addition, the great influence of cultural traditions and the sociocultural process particular to Asian countries has an impact on how learner autonomy is thought about and applied in teaching and learning.

For example, Ho and Crookall (1995) investigated two aspects of cultural background that may impede the development of learner autonomy within the Chinese context. First, these authors mentioned a “relation hierarchy” relating to Chinese social relations in the classroom, where “the roles of teachers and learners are rooted deeply in Chinese thinking” (p. 237). They indicated that according to the Asian notion of authority, the teacher is expected to exercise complete authority. In these classes, students rely on the “all-nurturing, all-benevolent, all-knowing teachers; that is, students tend to be very passive and dependent upon their teachers for learning” (Dang, 2010, p.7). Second, close to the Chinese respect for authority is the Chinese pre-occupation with ‘face’. Face here refers to others’ self-image and feelings. In communicating, “it is very important for a Chinese person to protect the other person’s self-image and feelings” (Ho & Crookall, 1995, p. 237). For example, in the classroom, the students are not allowed to confront teachers directly. This would be disrespectful and cause the teacher to lose face. Students must show their respect for teachers to save face. Autonomous learners, however, share decision making with their teacher as well as giving or presenting opinions that differ from their teacher’s, which might make the teacher ‘lose face’. Therefore, “it is, thus, easy to see why Chinese students would not find autonomy very comfortable, emotionally or indeed intellectually” (Ho & Crookall, 1995, p. 237). In this study, the authors considered how certain aspects of a learners’ cultural background may impede the promotion of autonomy. Ho and Crookall presented a model of simulation, in which participants acted as ministers to work out an international treaty on how to preserve the world’s ocean resources, as one way to transform the traditional classroom into an autonomous classroom. In this model, students were encouraged to work in teams to
negotiate and share their decision making in order to solve a given task. The researchers contended that a simulation can provide an authentic context for language learning and for promoting autonomy because simulations are unpredictable and require problem sharing among learners and between learners and teachers. The experiment was successful because the learners were actively involved in the process, they acted together to establish the goal and plan of action. The study indicated that although some aspects of Chinese culture can impede learner autonomy, teachers can still foster learner autonomy by using appropriate teaching strategies, in this case, simulations.

Benson, Chik and Lim (2003) suggested that it is necessary to define or recognise the ‘sense’ in which the development of autonomy forms part of the social-cultural process of second language learning for many Asian learners. These authors agreed with Littlewood (1999) in that it is important to explore how Asian cultural backgrounds have an effect on individual learners and how this influence can be modified or adjusted. Their study employed a narrative methodology in which the writers revealed two stories of Chik and Lim, Asian learners of English. Their stories showed that their learning of English was clearly influenced by their cultural background but the influence was complicated. However, their desire and ability to take advantage of the opportunity to learn English, to move beyond the constraints of their cultural backgrounds appeared to have been inextricably intertwined with a design and ability to develop their individual autonomy. The authors suggested that the development of a strong sense of individual autonomy is essential to this process because it helps such learners establish the critical distance from both the background and target language cultures that a bilingual identity implies.

Researchers (Little, 1995; Smith & Ushioda, 2009; Voller, 1997) have tended to focus more on developing autonomy in language classrooms through interdependence between teachers and learners, where teachers transform their role to become more like counselors or learner trainers rather than language transmitters in the language classroom. Little (1995), for instance, argued that “learner autonomy and teachers’ autonomy are interdependent” (p. 179). What is meant by this is that learner autonomy is never solitary. The learner’s acceptance of responsibility entails the gradual development of capacity for independent and flexible use of the target language but that teachers and learners are inevitably co-producers of such autonomy. Therefore, in the promotion of learner autonomy, the teacher’s task is to bring
learners to the point where they accept equal responsibility for this co-production. In order to do so, the teacher must be aware of the importance of negotiation in decision making about learning objectives, selecting learning materials, and assessment of the learning process. Little also emphasised that the more autonomous a learner gets, the more successful he/she becomes in their learning. Also true of teacher autonomy is that if a teacher wants to foster her learners’ autonomy, she must also be autonomous (Little, 1995). Little (1995) pointed out that “in the promotion of learner autonomy, the teacher’s task is to bring learners to the point where they accept equal responsibility for this co-production, not only at affective level but in terms of their readiness to undertake organizational (hence and discourse) initiatives” (p. 178). In order to proceed with the negotiation, the teacher must decide on the areas in which she will seek to promote autonomy. In this, she will be guided by the institutional framework and other learners’ factors.

Researchers (Aoki, 2008; Little, 1995; Littlewood, 1999, 2000) suggested that Asian learners have every chance of becoming autonomous learners with the right kinds of support and environment where the concept or the practice of autonomy is re-adjusted to the appropriate cultural context. For example, Aoki (2008) discussed teachers’ three stories to tell, namely: sacred stories, cover stories and secret stories. Sacred stories are stories that are told by all teachers; that is, all the activities they do both inside and outside the classroom without any feeling of being offended. “Cover stories are told by teachers outside their classroom in order to prove their competence and hide any uncertainties” (p. 15), whether or not these stories are true. Secret stories are stories that teachers would tell significant others in safe places where they feel they do not have to defend themselves” (p. 15). Aoki indicated that “learner autonomy, whatever it means to each of us, is part and parcel of teachers’ secret stories” (p. 15). Aoki argued that little autonomy in Asian classrooms is possibly because of a “mismatch between theoretical and pedagogical assumptions of teacher educators and how teachers actually learn and change (p. 15). Learning to support learner autonomy requires not only changes in teaching techniques but also teaching perspectives. To encourage teachers to tell their secret stories, they need to feel safe to interpret learner autonomy in their own way.

The studies reviewed here have focused upon learner autonomy within a particular context of Asia. The proposed study focuses on the thinking and beliefs of teachers in Vietnam in relation to learner autonomy. In particular it concentrates on how these beliefs
have an effect on the level of learner autonomy promoted and developed in the classroom. The current study will be situated in Vietnam, so it is important now to discuss the research on learner autonomy in this context.

2.3.2 Approaches to fostering learner autonomy in the Vietnamese context

Learner autonomy has attracted the attention of researchers all over the world for more than three decades. More specifically, learner autonomy in second language learning has been investigated extensively, especially in developed countries. However, in the context of Vietnam, where traditional teaching methods are commonly employed (Dang, 2010; Pham, 2008; Phan, 2006), research into learner autonomy has been limited. Although, learner autonomy is not an entirely new term in Vietnamese educational settings, further research needs to be conducted to develop deeper understandings of learner autonomy and how it might be applied within Vietnamese classrooms.

Although learner autonomy in Vietnamese contexts has been interpreted differently, in each case, the definitions include learners’ self-regulated skills such as planning or initiating, monitoring, and assessing or evaluating their learning (Dang, 2010; Le, 2013; Nguyen, 2010; Trinh, 2005). The above three researchers agreed that autonomy in language learning can be applied within a Vietnamese context and that Vietnamese learners could be trained to be autonomous; however, their research has approached the notion of fostering learner autonomy in the Vietnamese educational contexts differently.

Trinh’s (2005) study, for example, investigated how to promote learner autonomy in Vietnam through curriculum adaptation and innovation conducted through three studies concerning the design of the adapted curriculum. This study includes analysing the Vietnamese context, investigating the problems and the quality of English language education in Vietnam since its reunification in 1975, reviewing relevant literature on learner autonomy, language competence, and curriculum development; and designing an adapted curriculum. Two empirical pre-test and post-test experiments were conducted with one group to check the effect of the adapted curriculum. Participants were EFL first-year students at Can Tho University. A questionnaire was administered to measure self-regulation, intrinsic motivation and attitudes towards autonomous learning. The study showed that task-based language learning best fits the aims of stimulating the development of learner autonomy and communicative competence. The findings revealed that “to develop learner autonomy and
English competence, learners should access opportunities to use the target language authentically while doing the tasks to learn the language” (p. 179). Another finding was the set of four parameters (i.e., choices, interactions, task features and learner development) for a curriculum aiming at stimulating learner autonomy and communicative competence. The study also indicated a theoretical framework for the two key concepts: learner autonomy and communicative competence. The researcher argued that both relied on the concept of strategic competence (i.e., meta-cognitive activities for self-regulation: planning, monitoring and evaluating learning performance). Theoretically, this study has proposed working frameworks for the concepts of communicative competence, language tasks and learner autonomy in language learning while empirically, the study has contributed values to the universality of learner autonomy in the Asian contexts and to the body of literature on learner autonomy (Trinh, 2005). The study strongly supports the view that it is not the case that (Vietnamese) learners themselves are not autonomous learners by nature. The result shows that “developing a curriculum in light of task-based approaches is one effective way to develop learner autonomy” (Trinh, 2005, p. 179). In the Vietnamese contexts, it is the teachers who are in charge of designing and developing teaching, materials and curriculum. So the issue is whether all the teachers are able and willing to become autonomous themselves and/or to adapt the material to foster students’ autonomous learning. This area warrants further investigation.

Nguyen (2010) explored the relationship between learner autonomy and students’ language proficiency and investigated how learner autonomy can be best integrated into the classroom learning. While Trinh (2005) explored learner autonomy as a curriculum-based approach in her study, Nguyen explored it through a learner-based approach. Nguyen defined learner autonomy as “learners’ self-initiation plus their ability to self-regulate their own learning” (Nguyen, 2008, p. 68, cited in Nguyen, 2010, p. 50). Self-initiation includes two elements: “reasons for learning and making efforts to learn, or the cause and motive for learning” (Nguyen, 2010, p. 50). Self-regulation indicates the learners’ act “of planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning” (p. 51). These two elements of the definition focus on the learner and the task. It is argued that this view of learner autonomy can work in Vietnam or in other contexts where learners have to follow the curriculum and syllabus designed by the government so Nguyen’s findings are useful for research on learner autonomy in the Vietnamese context in relation to the power relations of learning in the
Vietnamese classroom. Nguyen’s study indicated that learner autonomy and students’ language proficiency have a positive relationship. Nguyen stated that “like other Asian learners…Vietnamese learners are autonomous. The Vietnamese culture, did not inhibit but, facilitated learner autonomy” (Nguyen, 2010, p. 295). However, “while the self-initiation of learners is not easily changed or improved through teaching, it is possible to enhance it through teaching learners meta-cognitive skills of planning, monitoring and evaluating” (Nguyen, 2009, p. 295). To put it another way, learners need to be trained in learning strategies to become more autonomous.

Dang (2010) adopted a sociocultural perspective to localise the situation of EFL learning in higher education in Vietnam. Dang investigated learner autonomy in a framework consisting of three factors: resources, learner identities, and practices (ways of teaching and learning). He concluded that coordinating attributes from the three dimensions of the framework plays a significant role in promoting learner autonomy. The study showed three results. First, teachers should include students’ voices as well as their involvement in their actions. Second, teachers should take into account the local sociocultural characteristics to adapt their teaching. Finally, Dang suggested that because “it is difficult for teachers to negotiate with authority, it is better for them to do so with their students because it is within their power to do so” (p. 7). However, Dang advised that it will take time for students to modify their learning habits to engage in such a decision making process. The study concluded by suggesting that although learner autonomy is construed, nurtured and developed during one’s interaction with the environment, learner autonomy is a personal ability which is produced and performed by each individual in a certain context.

The studies cited above have focused on promoting learner autonomy in EFL students in Vietnam. Although they have different approaches toward the issue, one thing that is common is the concern related to application of learner autonomy into the Vietnamese context. All three studies found that teachers have the power to promote learner autonomy if they believe it is worthwhile to pursue.

2.4 TEACHERS’ BELIEFS IN RELATION TO LEARNER AUTONOMY

This section of the thesis explores the notion of teachers’ beliefs and how these beliefs might affect the adoption of learner autonomy as an approach to teaching and learning in Vietnamese classrooms. It responds to the first sub-question of the research: What are
Vietnamese EFL teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy? However, in order to address this question, it is necessary to consider further the issue of beliefs.

2.4.1 Beliefs

Beliefs play an important role in many aspects of life (Aguirre & Speer, 2000; Austin, 2001; Borg, 2001, 2003; Calderhead, 1981; Mansour, 2013; Munby, 1982; Pajares, 1992; Prawat, 1992; Woods, 1996). They are involved in helping individuals make sense of the world, influence how new information is perceived, accepted or rejected. However, defining the concept of beliefs is so confusing that Pajares called it “a messy construct” (Pajares, 1992). The confusion generally centres on the distinction between beliefs and knowledge. Borg (2001) distinguished these two concepts in terms of “the truth element”: beliefs are “a mental state” which one holds and accepts as true, “although the individual may recognise that alternative beliefs may be held by others” (p. 186) (the belief holders always contend that the beliefs they have are always true in their own opinion, though others may disagree with them). In contrast, “knowledge must actually be true in some external sense” (p. 186). According to Pajares (1992), “Belief is based on evaluation and judgment; knowledge is based on objective fact” (Pajares, 1992, p. 313). Other theorists have noted that knowledge is often defined as factual information while beliefs are more personal and experiential in origin and appear to influence what and how knowledge will be used (Ennis, 1994; Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987). For example, two teachers may have similar knowledge, but teach in different ways because of the powerful effect of beliefs on their decision making (Ernest, 1989). Therefore, it can be noted that beliefs are more personal and subjective than knowledge; a person’s beliefs affect the way his/her knowledge can be used (Nespor, 1987).

Some researchers preferred the term ‘perspective’ to ‘beliefs’ such as Chan (2003). Teacher perspective can be defined as “a reflective, socially defined interpretation of experience that serves as a basis for subsequent action, a combination of beliefs, intentions, interpretation, and behaviour that interact continually” (Janesick (1997) cited in Pajares (1992, p. 314)). These perspectives are situation-specific and action-oriented. However, Pajares contended that it is not so much orientation to action but the interpretation of beliefs that define teachers’ perspectives, “it is the beliefs that guide behaviours” (Pajares, 1992, p. 315). For this reason, in the current research, the researcher prefers the term ‘beliefs’.
It is clear that beliefs have been inferred quite differently by different researchers. Nespor (1987) defined beliefs by identifying four features of beliefs: “existential presumption, alternativity, affective and evaluative loading, and episodic structure” (p. 318), which mean that beliefs frequently include propositions or assumptions about the existence of various types of entities. Beliefs can be seen as a means of defining goals and tasks, can be said to rely much more heavily on affective and evaluative components (such as personal preferences, “feelings, moods, subjective evaluations” (p. 319)) than knowledge and are organised in episodic memory which is organised around personal experiences or episodes. In agreement with that, Pajares (1992) explained that “beliefs is based on evaluations and judgments” (p. 313) and inferences of “what people say, intend, and do” (p. 314). An individual’s beliefs often must be inferred from statements and actions. Borg (2001) defined beliefs as “a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by individuals, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior” (p. 186).

General agreement among researchers indicated that understanding beliefs requires making inferences about individuals’ underlying states (Ennis, 1994; Munby, 1982). However, this is difficult to do because individuals are often unable or unwilling, for many reasons, to accurately represent their beliefs (Williams & Burden, 1997; Veen, 1993). Therefore, beliefs cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do (Borg, 2001; Bullock, 2010; Ennis, 1994; Mansour, 2013; Peacock, 2001; Pajares, 1992). In other words, beliefs do not lend themselves easily to investigation, not least because they are complex and often contradictory and also because they are not directly observable or measurable, but rather inferred (Pajares, 1992). Another issue is that there is an inconsistency between beliefs and practices (Mansour, 2013). This should be expected because of the complexities of classroom life (Bullock, 2010). Indeed, various factors, for example, the social factor (teachers’ authority) strongly influence teachers’ instructional decisions (Ennis, 1994; Mansour, 2013).

Belief systems are composed of beliefs, attitudes, and values (Ennis, 1994; Pajares, 1992, Peacock, 2001). When beliefs and knowledge are organised around a phenomenon, they are described as attitudes. For example, attitudes about education are connected to other interpersonal or social concepts to form a network. The network might include attitudes about
schools, communities, violence, service, and family. Beliefs are described as values when they are used for evaluative, comparative, or judgmental purposes. Values are influential in decisions to accept or reject knowledge as feasible, useful, or essential. Values can be described as the utilisation of a belief system for decision making (Pajares, 1992). For the purposes of exploring the roles of beliefs on goals and instructional practice, Aguirre and Speer (2000) described beliefs as personal philosophies (often implicitly held) that consist of three elements: conceptions, values, and ideologies that shape practice and orient knowledge.

To sum up, a person’s belief is a proposition that is personally held with or without consciousness; this proposition has an impact on the holder’s behavior; therefore, beliefs must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do (Borg, 2001; Pajares, 1992). Understanding beliefs is important as they relate to teachers as they provide some indication of how teachers behave in their practice. The cornerstone of the current research is in exploring the connection between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and their teaching practice in this area which will be examined below.

2.4.2 Teachers’ beliefs

All teachers hold beliefs about their profession, themselves as professionals and matters beyond their profession. The term teachers’ beliefs are usually used to refer to as educational beliefs (Pajares, 1992) or “teachers’ pedagogic beliefs or those beliefs of relevance to an individual’s teaching” (Borg, 2001, p. 187). Because the construct of the term ‘teachers’ beliefs’ is so broad and encompassing, each researcher has to specify the field or scope of the beliefs that they want to investigate. For example, research about teachers’ confidence to affect students’ performance is called teacher efficacy, research about the nature of language relates to epistemological beliefs; research about the causes of teachers’ or students’ performance may focus on attribution, locus of control, motivation, or writing apprehension and so on (see Borg (2003) for the review of research in this field). The current research focuses on teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy.

Ennis (1994) emphasised that beliefs are connected to teachers’ social systems and may develop in response to political and economic opportunities and limitations within the teaching environment. Teachers’ beliefs are formed over their professional careers through chance observations, intense experiences (either positive or negative), or a series of events that convince them of the truth of some rationale or relationship. Teachers may hold one or a
combination of beliefs about their students. William and Burden (1997) listed seven different ways in which teachers can and do construe learners metaphorically including students as: resisters, receptacles, raw material, clients, partners, individual explorers, and democratic explorers. Among these seven types, the more active learners are described as individual explorers and democratic explorers. In contrast, students who do not want to learn, but are made to do so are the least likely to be autonomous.

Williams and Burden (1997) pointed out that we can only be effective teachers if we are clear in our mind about what we mean by learning because only then can we know what kinds of learning outcomes we want our students to achieve. Whether a teacher acts spontaneously, or from habit without thinking about the action, such actions are nevertheless prompted by deep-rooted beliefs that may never have been articulated or made explicit. Thus, teachers’ deep-rooted beliefs about how language is learnt will pervade their classroom actions more than a particular methodology they are told to adopt or course book they follow. Williams and Burden (1997) believed that worthwhile learning is a complex process that produces personal change of some kind and involves the creation of new understandings which are personally relevant. Worthwhile learning can take a number of different forms and is always influenced by the context in which it occurs. Richardson (2010) stated six different conceptions on learning in higher education: learning as the increase of knowledge, learning as memorising, learning as the acquisition of facts or procedures, learning as the abstraction of meaning, learning as an interpretative process aimed at the understanding of reality, learning as a conscious process, fuelled by personal interests and directed at obtaining harmony and happiness or changing society. Teachers who hold beliefs about learning as an interpretative process aimed at the understanding of reality, and as a conscious process, fuelled by personal interests and directed at obtaining harmony and happiness or changing society are considered as the most autonomous teachers.

Teachers’ beliefs about the nature of effective teaching are defined by the approaches they think are most important in enhancing their students’ learning (Dunkin, 2002). According to Dunkin (2002), there are four main dimensions in effective teaching. First, to enhance students learning, teachers have to structure their teaching very carefully. They need to be very well organised, and thoroughly prepared, with student work carefully laid out and assessed. Second, teachers need to believe that success in teaching depends on motivating
learners. The chief task for teachers is to arouse interest, enthusiasm and a love for the subject so that students get involved and motivated to learn. Next, teachers see effective teaching to consist of making students active and independent learners. They seem to be particularly concerned to give their students hands-on experiences, to have them solve problems and to become self-efficient learners. Finally, teachers believe that effective teaching is primarily a social relationship in which students are made to feel secure, to see their teachers as approachable, nurturing people on whom they could rely for help.

Woolfolk (2004) pointed out that expert teachers not only know the content of the subject they teach; they also know how to relate this content to the world outside the classroom and how to keep students involved in learning. There are seven areas of professional knowledge that expert teachers know:

1. The academic subjects they teach.
2. General teaching strategies that apply in all subjects.
3. The curriculum materials and programs appropriate for their subject and grade level.
4. Subject-specific knowledge for teaching: special ways of teaching certain students and particular concepts.
5. The characteristics and cultural backgrounds of learners.
6. The settings in which students learn- pairs, small groups, teams, classes, schools, and the community.
7. The goals and purposes of teaching. (p. 6)

It is believed that effective teachers create a learning atmosphere in which students are cognitively and affectively expanding. A positive learning atmosphere helps to develop good learners. This perspective emphasises what the teacher as a person brings to the teaching-learning relationship and how the learners can be helped as a whole person by the provision of a supportive learning environment created by the teacher, which allows learners to develop in their own way.

According to Richardson (2010), teaching can be seen as imparting information, transmitting structured knowledge, as an interaction between the teacher and the student, as facilitating understanding on the part of the student, and as bringing about the conceptual change and intellectual development in the student. The researcher emphasized that beliefs
about teaching vary markedly across different disciplines, but that teachers teaching the same
disciplines at different institutions had relatively similar conceptions of teaching.

Teachers’ sense of efficacy

One important self-referenced belief for teaching is a sense of efficacy (Hoy, Davis &
Pape, 2006). The authors defined “teacher efficacy is the teacher’s beliefs in her or his ability
to organise and execute the courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific
teaching task in a particular context” (p. 727). Among practicing teachers, efficacy is one of
the few teacher characteristics consistently related to student achievement. Teachers who
have high efficacy expectations appear to put in more effort and persistence in specific
teaching tasks and engage in activities that support learning. Teacher efficacy is also related
to commitment to teaching and job satisfaction. One of the fundamental notions about
efficacy is that it is situational and task-specific (Bandura, 1986, 1995). For example, a
successful experience with teaching appears to have a positive impact on teachers’ efficacy
and so a teacher is likely to continue with this kind of teaching behaviour.

Since the 1990s, there has been a surge in research into teachers’ beliefs. Bullock
(2010) stated that this trend has stemmed from a growing consensus that to understand
teaching, it is necessary to understand in what language teachers think, know, believe, and
do. Studies suggest that teachers’ beliefs influence instructional behaviours and actual
teaching practices. Roehrig and Kruse (2005) wrote of beliefs as a personal construct
important to the holder’s practice. For example, Aguirre and Speer’s study (2000) analysed
how teachers’ beliefs interact with goals and influence the moment-to-moment actions of
teaching. They found that beliefs play a central role in a teacher’s selection and prioritisation
of goals and actions. The authors described that effective teachers have high teacher efficacy.
It is suggested that if teachers as educators constantly re-evaluate their beliefs about
language, learners, learning, and teaching or about education as a whole, teachers will first
understand and articulate their own theoretical perspectives and become effective teachers.

These studies provide strong evidence that teachers are highly influenced by their
beliefs. The review of literature concluded that teachers’ beliefs had a greater influence than
teachers’ knowledge on the way they planned their lessons, on the kinds of decisions they
made and on the general classroom practice (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs were also found to be far
more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks
and problems, and were better predictors of how teachers behaved in the classroom (Aguirre & Speer, 2000). There also needs to be an increased awareness of the pivotal role of teachers in the successful implementation of new approaches.

2.4.3 Teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy

Teachers hold different beliefs about various issues in education; and teachers’ beliefs have an important influence on their teaching (Borg, 2001; Pajares, 1992). Some researchers (Balcikanli, 2010; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Chan, 2003; Sakai & Takagi & Chu, 2010) have explored teachers’ beliefs and perceptions in promoting learner autonomy. Although, the researchers have used the common term “teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy”, they explore different aspects or fields within this broad term.

Chan (2003), for example, provided “a rich source of information on Hong Kong university teachers’ perspectives and their language teaching practices regarding learner autonomy” (p. 48). The framework to investigate teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy included teachers’ perceptions of their roles and responsibility, their perceptions of their students’ abilities in decision making, the impact of learner autonomy on teachers’ teaching; the teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards learner autonomy as well as the actual activities that teachers ask their students to take up both inside and outside the classroom. The study’s results showed that all the surveyed teachers had positive attitudes and awareness of learner autonomy, however, they had “a well-defined view of their own role and responsibilities (p. 49). They also indicated that students “were able to make some decisions in the classrooms”, however “teachers preferred the responsibilities for these activities to be mainly taken by themselves, rather handed over to the students” (p. 49). The author indicated some limitations of the study such as in order to have an insight of teachers’ beliefs, it is necessary to observe their activities in classroom or their actual teaching practices to see whether there is a mismatch between their autonomous beliefs and behaviours. The current study takes up this point for its research design.

Al-Shaqui (2009) examined teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in Oman based on two main areas: teachers’ perception of the characteristics of autonomous learners, and teachers’ assessment of their learners’ autonomy. A clear finding from this study was that overall the teachers had positive views about the extent to which their learners were autonomous. This can be seen as an interesting insight into teachers’ views about learner
autonomy; however, the study did not explore the extent to which teachers’ positive views about learner autonomy were justified. Also, in this context, Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) conducted a project to develop learner autonomy in Oman. They administered a survey with 200 teachers and found that the teachers held a wide range of beliefs about learner autonomy. Following the survey, they conducted serial workshops for the teacher professional development regarding learner autonomy. This will be discussed later in following sections.

Balcikanli (2010) investigated prospective teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in the Turkish educational contexts. The researcher explored learner autonomy in areas such as the involvement of students in classroom management, homework tasks, assessment, and so on from the perspective of student teachers. A questionnaire and follow-up interviews were used to collect data. The study’s results showed that student teachers had positive attitudes and a “clear view of learner autonomy and the involvement of students in the learning process”, and “the student teachers would probably feel ready to pass onto their future students some responsibilities and choices” (Balcikanli, 2010, p. 98). The study also suggested some constraining factors to the development of learner autonomy in the Turkish educational contexts, including: “the teacher-centred approach to teaching in which the traditional teaching methods are widely utilised” (p. 99); the fixed time and place of any course; and the high authority of the teachers in the teaching and learning process.

Previous studies have one important thing in common - the researchers assumed that the investigated teachers understood the term learner autonomy; therefore, they focused on discovering the attitudes and perceptions of a particular aspect of learner autonomy. All showed the general findings - the teachers had positive attitudes towards learner autonomy. These studies did not investigate teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in-depth, including the factors influencing their beliefs and perceptions on learner autonomy or the effects of beliefs on teachers’ actual teaching practices. These factors have been absent from the research.

The current researcher does not assume an understanding of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in the Vietnamese educational contexts because this term is quite a new one in Vietnam. The current study begins its focus by exploring the deeper beliefs Vietnamese teachers have about learner autonomy. It then explores how these beliefs have an effect on the level of learner autonomy in the classroom that is fostered by these teachers.
2.4.4 Factors affecting teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy

Researchers do not have direct information about how beliefs come into being or how they are strengthened or weakened (Nespor, 1987). However, several researchers have mentioned some factors that affect teachers’ beliefs. Bandura (1986) triadic reciprocity theory (see section 2.5.3) shows the reciprocal interrelationship between beliefs, behaviours, and environment. Bandura’s idea on the interactions between individuals and the environment can be useful in understanding the evolution of the beliefs that teachers hold. In this theory, Bandura suggested that environment, behaviour, and beliefs have reciprocal relationships. This means teachers’ beliefs have an influence on behaviour and environments and that behaviour and environment have an effect on teachers’ beliefs. Thus, the researcher of the current study believes that Bandura’s (1977) theory is suitable for the current research in order to explore the factors affecting the translation of teachers’ beliefs into teaching behaviors.

Ernest’s study (1989) mentioned two factors affecting teachers’ beliefs: the social context and the level of teachers’ thought. First of all, the social context has a powerful impact on teachers’ beliefs. Social context includes the expectations of parents, students, fellow teachers and supervisors, curriculum, and the educational system as a whole. Teachers may have to compromise and negotiate internally all of these expectations and requirements in relation to their teaching. However, it happens that teachers in the same school often adopt similar classroom practices even if they hold different beliefs. The current research will explore this notion in relation to learner autonomy with Vietnamese teachers. The second factor is teachers’ level of consciousness about their own beliefs which are reflected in their instructional practices. Ernest (1989) listed key elements in teachers’ thinking and their relationship to practice including awareness of having adopted specific views and assumptions as to the nature of the subject matter or issue; the ability to justify these views and assumptions. These two factors can either constrain or provide opportunities that impact teachers’ beliefs and their actual teaching. In the Vietnamese educational contexts where the social cultural factors pose great influence on the teaching-learning process, Ernest’s factors will be taken into consideration in the current research.
2.5 TEACHERS’ BEHAVIOUR

This section provides an explanation of the importance of teachers’ role and teachers’ teaching practice regarding learner autonomy in Vietnamese classrooms and responds to the sub-question of the research: *What are teachers’ actual teaching practices regarding learner autonomy?*

2.5.1 Role of the teacher

Numerous studies have explored the role of the teacher and show there are various conflicting demands on the teacher that result in role conflict (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Braga, 1972). Within the scope of the current research, it is necessary to first acknowledge the general role that a teacher has in the classroom and then the role that a teacher has to foster learner autonomy in the Vietnamese educational context. Braga (1972) argued that the key to defining the teacher’s role is the person who defines the teacher’s role because students have different expectations of the teacher’s role from the expectations of the administrators or the teacher themselves. In the context of language education, it could be argued that the roles of the teacher depend on the approach of teaching and learning.

“Teaching is often described as being either teacher-centred or learner-centred” (Killen, 2013, p.94) which differs in a number of important ways, including what the teacher does, how the lessons are organised, how much the learners are actively involved in learning and how much learners control their own learning. The difference between these two approaches can be seen in the following table (Table 2.1) which summarises the discipline comparison between these two approaches. There is no doubt that teacher-centred teaching places the teacher as the focus of the process. Therefore, the teacher plays a critical role and has great control in the class. The teacher acts as the knowledge provider. In contrast, the learner-centred approach emphasises the learner as the focus. This does not mean that teacher’s role is lost but she acts as the facilitator of the learning process.

Table 2.1

*Discipline comparison in teacher-centred and person-centred classrooms:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher-centred</th>
<th>Student-centred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher is the sole leader.</td>
<td>Leadership is shared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management is a form of oversight.</td>
<td>Management is a form of guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher takes responsibility for all</td>
<td>Students are facilitators for the operations of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork and organization.</td>
<td>The classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline comes from the teacher.</td>
<td>Discipline comes from the self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few students are the teacher’ helpers.</td>
<td>All students have the opportunity to become an integral part of the management of the classroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher makes the rules and posts them for all students.</th>
<th>Rules are developed by the teacher and students in the form of a constitution or compact.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consequences are fixed for all students.</td>
<td>Consequences reflect individual differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards are mostly extrinsic.</td>
<td>Rewards are mostly intrinsic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are allowed limited responsibilities.</td>
<td>Students share in classroom responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few members of the community enter the classroom.</td>
<td>Partnerships are formed with business and community groups to enrich and broaden the learning opportunities for students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Rogers & Frieberg, 1994)

It is possible that a student-centred teaching approach is the best way to develop understanding. Taking the constructivist approach, the current research argues that teachers take into account the learner’s knowledge and context, and then attempt to develop understanding on that basis. This approach is somewhere in the middle of the continuum of teaching strategies, from teacher to student-centred, where knowledge is developed by negotiation between teachers and students (Kember, 1998; Killen, 2013; Prosser & Trigwell, 1998; Rogers & Frieberg, 1994).

The following section represents the teacher’s role in fostering learner autonomy and possible activities that teachers might employ to become autonomous teachers. It has been emphasised by many researchers (Benson, 1997; Dam, 2008; Little, 1991; Nunan, 1997; Voller, 1997) that the role of the teacher in an autonomous classroom differs markedly from her role in a traditional environment. Researchers agreed that teachers act as a counselor, advisor and/or facilitator in their class where the primary responsibility is in supporting the learners to become actively involved in their learning: planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating learning.

For example, Voller (1997) identified that “the idea of the teacher as a facilitator of learning is as a helper whose role it is to facilitate learning” (p. 101). The psychological-social features of a facilitator include “personal qualities (being caring, supportive, patient, tolerant, empathic, open, and non-judgmental), a capacity for motivating learners, and an ability to raise learners’ awareness” (p. 102). The technical support that a facilitator gives to her students includes helping them “to plan and carry out their independent language
learning, objective setting, helping learners evaluate their learning, and helping them to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to implement the above” (p. 102). The teacher should negotiate with her learners how to do these jobs. Second, the teacher has a role as a counselor to whom the learners turn for consultation and guidance. Lastly, teachers can be seen as resource for students’ learning. Whatever teachers view their role in the classroom are, the key point in fostering learner autonomy lays in the teachers’ clear “view and attitudes that underpin our view of autonomous language learning” (Voller, 1997, p. 112).

Little (2009) argued that learning depends crucially on language use, and that the scope of learner autonomy is always constrained by what the learner can do in the target language (p. 2), and in order to foster learner autonomy, the teacher should:

- Use the target language as the preferred medium of classroom communication and require the same of learners;
- Involve her learners in a non-stop quest for good learning activities, which are shared, discussed, analysed and evaluated with the whole class - in the target language, and to begin with very single terms;
- Help learners to set their own targets and choose their own learning activities subjecting them to discussion, analysis and evaluation - again, in the target language;
- Require learners to identify individual goals but pursue them through collaborative work in small groups;
- Require learners to keep a written record of their learning - plans of lessons and projects, lists of useful vocabulary, whatever texts they themselves produce;
- Engage learners in regular evaluation of their progress as individual learners and as a class - in the target language.

(Little, 2009, p.2)

According to Little (2009), to foster learner autonomy in second language teaching and learning, the teacher must play the role of getting students more involved with language use “to give learners access to a full range of discourse roles” (p. 153).

Dam (2008) focused on five aspects of the teacher’s role in fostering learner autonomy: making learners aware of the demands and conditions for and when planning; presenting some kind of structure in connection with carrying out the plans; evaluating the work undertaken, during as well as after a task or a period; reducing teacher’s talking time;
and being prepared to let go. In the current research, Nunan’s (1997) models of degrees of learner autonomy in language classroom and Dam’s (2008) five aspects are taken into account because the activities and roles that the teacher does in the class fit together very well within the Vietnamese context. As Dam (2008) emphasised, in order to help learners to plan and do their tasks, the teacher needs to help learners to know and understand the tasks. Although, the suggested activities presented in her paper were primarily based on her experience of developing learner autonomy working with primary students and adults refugees and immigrants, it is clear that to promote learner autonomy, the teacher’s role is to support and guide their learners.

Dam’s (2011) longitudinal projects named LAALE (Language acquisition in an autonomous learning environment) saw “the development of learner autonomy as a move from an often totally teacher-directed teaching environment to a possible learner-directed learning environment” (p. 41). In this project, teacher’s roles are emphasised. Teachers must encourage learners to be willing to take over the responsibility for planning, monitoring, and evaluating and also support them in becoming capable of doing so. The research showed “the importance of choice”, “clear guidelines for the learners for what to do”, “the importance of learning over teaching”, “authenticity in the language classroom”, and “evaluation” as principles for developing learner autonomy in the classroom (pp. 43-44). The author presented a model to put these principles into practice. In this process, the teacher creates a learning environment where learners gradually are made (co-)responsible for their own learning. The organisation of the classroom is important because “it supports the social aspects of learning” (p. 46). In this process, logbooks, portfolios, and posters are really important for visualising and documenting the learning process. The teacher should take responsibility for ‘introducing activities’ in which students acquire the use of the ‘target language’ and can ‘differentiate’ between input and outcomes for learning (p. 47). Evaluation should be done on a regular and/or daily basis with multiple forms such as written accounts (feedback) besides the use of traditional classroom assessment. While this model has brought many positive results, the author stressed the importance of the language teacher’s knowledge and understanding about learner autonomy and fostering learner autonomy for it to happen effectively.
Reeve (2006) categorised teachers as high or low in autonomy support and made several interesting findings. Reeve argued that “students can be curious, proactive, and highly engaged, or they can be alienated, reactive, and passive. Just how engaged students are during instructions depends, in part, on the supportive quality of classroom conditions in which their learning take place” (p. 225). Teachers play vital role in creating the autonomy-supportive classroom by “nurturing students’ inner motivational resources” and using “informational, non-controlling language” (p. 229). In particular, teachers high in autonomy support or autonomy-supportive teachers tend to create or design their teaching with the references to students’ needs. In other words, they do not ask their students “to adhere to a teacher-constructed instructional agenda” (p. 228). In addition, in order to engage their students in the learning process, these teachers should provide students with rationales for requested activities. Teachers should “acknowledge and accept students’ expression of negative affect” (p. 230). Regarding teachers’ autonomy-supportive behaviours, Reeve presented a list of nine “instructional behaviours function as autonomy support” (p. 231). For example, they listened to their students more often and allowed students to handle and manipulate the instructional materials and ideas more often; they were more likely to ask about students’ wants, respond to student-generated questions, and volunteer perspective taking statements meant to relay to the student the teacher’s understanding of the student’s emotional state. It is concluded that “students benefit when teachers act as facilitators … who structure the learning environment” (p. 234) in ways that can help them take control of their learning.

However, Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCintio and Turner (2004) countered that providing choice about learning tasks had little impact on students’ perceptions of autonomy or on self-reported behaviours and cognitive engagement. These researchers defined “three distinct features of autonomy support” (p. 101), including organisational autonomy, procedural autonomy, and cognitive autonomy. Organisational autonomy support happen when students are allowed to be responsible for their classroom management issue. For example, students can make decision on their group members, seating places or due dates for assignments. Another distinct feature of autonomy support called procedural autonomy support. In this classroom, students are able to take control over “media to present idea” (p. 101). For example, they are allowed to select the materials for learning tasks. The third level of autonomy support is cognitive autonomy support which “encourages student ownership of the learning” (p. 101) by involving in activities to justify or argue their point. For example,
teachers can ask their students “to generate their own solution paths, or asking students to evaluate their own and others’ solutions or ideas” (p. 101). This research suggested that it is cognitive autonomy support that truly leads to the psychological investment in learning that educators strive for. Table 2.2 illustrates the ideas in this paragraph.

Table 2.2 Strategies associated with different features of autonomy support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisational autonomy support</th>
<th>Procedural autonomy support</th>
<th>Cognitive autonomy support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are given opportunities to:</td>
<td>Students are given opportunities to:</td>
<td>Students are given opportunities to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose group members</td>
<td>Choose materials to use in class projects</td>
<td>Discuss multiple approaches and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose evaluation procedure</td>
<td>Choose the way competence will be demonstrated</td>
<td>Find multiple solutions to problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take responsibility for the due dates for assignment</td>
<td>Display work in an individual manner</td>
<td>Justify solutions for the purpose of sharing expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in creating and implementing classroom rules</td>
<td>Discuss their wants</td>
<td>Have ample time for decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing seating arrangement</td>
<td>Handle materials</td>
<td>Be independent problem solvers with scaffolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Re-evaluate errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Receive informational feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formulate personal goals or realign task to respond with interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Debate ideas freely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have less teacher talk time; more teacher listening time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ask questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Stefanou et al., 2004, p. 101)

As discussed above, in order to be successful in implementing and reinforcing learner autonomy, teachers need to be aware of their role and responsibilities from information
providers to facilitators. This requires that teachers are willing to change and negotiate with their students in the classroom. In order to promote autonomous learning, teachers have to be prepared to accept their new role (Little, 1995).

In particular, Nunan (1996) makes the difference between ‘autonomy-focused’ classroom and ‘institution-centred’ which is a really useful distinction for the current research. He suggested that:

At the syllabus-planning stage, in the institution-centred classroom, it is the institution or the teacher who makes all the decisions about what will be taught and when it will be taught. These decisions will be made with little or no reference to the actual or potential communicative needs of the learners. In an autonomy-focused classroom, on the other hand, the selection and sequencing of content will be made with reference to the sorts of uses to which the learner will want to put the language outside of the classroom, and learner themselves will be involved in the selection, modification and adaptation on both content and process. This involvement on the part of the learner can be encouraged by the use of subjective needs assessment instruments such as the needs assessment questionnaire…In selecting learning experiences, in an autonomy-focused classroom, the teacher will introduce a range of learning activities and tasks. There will also be an attempt to identify the learning style preferences of the learner, and use these as the starting point in making methodological selections. There is a further element which distinguishes an autonomy-focused from institution-centred classroom. In the former, the learners will be encouraged to reflect on their learning experiences, and to evaluate the opportunities made available to them in the class. In this way, they learn not only about the target language, but about the learning process itself. This need not be an elaborate, time-consuming or difficult process. In terms of assessment and evaluation, classrooms which have the development of autonomy as a goal will place great store on training learners in techniques of self-assessment, ongoing monitoring, self-evaluation and reflection.

(Little, 1996, pp. 23-24)

Table 2.3 outlines the key elements of these two approaches to learner autonomy.
Table 2.3  
Comparison between autonomy-focused & institution-focused classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Autonomy-focused</th>
<th>Institution-centred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus-planning stage</td>
<td>- Decisions made with sorts of uses of language outside classroom.</td>
<td>Institution or Teacher makes all decisions about what will be taught with little or no reference to Students’ needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students are involved in the selection, modification, and adaptation on both content and process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting learning experiences</td>
<td>- Teacher introduces a range of activities and tasks.</td>
<td>Teacher or Institution selects all the tasks and activities without or with very little reference about students’ needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- There will be attempts to identify learning styles to make methodological decisions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students are encouraged to reflect on their learning experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment and evaluation</td>
<td>Training students in techniques of self-assessment, ongoing monitoring, self-evaluation and reflection.</td>
<td>Teacher assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5.2 Teachers’ role in fostering learner autonomy in the Vietnamese context

The approach to teaching and learning in this current study emphasises that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered, and that learning should be the centre of teaching. The current study also emphasises the important role of teacher in helping students to make sense of the world through the negotiation and collaboration which helps them develop their understanding. From the working definition of learner autonomy in the current research: learner’ willingness and ability to take responsibility, to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate his/her learning with tasks that are constructed in negotiation with and support from the teacher, the role of the teacher in helping students develop learner autonomy requires attention. The above definition deals with the concept of learner autonomy in the Vietnamese educational context, which places the learner at the centre of focus with the support of the teacher. Within a lot of potential constraints from the local contexts, the current research argues that the primary role of the teacher is, first, to be aware of their roles.
in fostering learner autonomy in their context; give the students some control over the learning process; and finally, scaffold students’ development of learner autonomy.

2.5.3 The relationship between teachers’ beliefs and behaviour regarding learner autonomy

This section provides an explanation of the importance of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in Vietnamese classrooms as they relate to teaching practices and responds to the sub-question of the research: *What is the association between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and teachers’ actual teaching practices?* This section will also describe factors that may affect teachers’ beliefs in relation to learner autonomy incorporated into teaching practice.

A growing body of literature shows that teachers’ beliefs affect their classroom practices although the nature of the relationship is highly complex (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Borg, 2001; Bullock, 2010; Mansour, 2013; Pajares, 1992; Woods, 1996; Zheng, 2013). The relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their classroom practices has been challenging to the researchers in the field (Borg, 2001; Kelchtermans, 2013). More specifically, researchers have been interested in the extent to which teachers’ stated beliefs correspond with what they do in the class, and there is evidence that the two do not always coincide (Gebel & Shrier, 2002). For example, research (Aguirre & Speer, 2000; Ernest, 1989; Stande, 2002) reported high consistency between teachers’ beliefs and practices in science and mathematics, while others (Kynigos & Argyris, 2004) have identified some inconsistencies or tensions between these two. Findings from some recent studies (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Mansour, 2009; 2013; Zheng, 2013) indicated that the relationships between teachers’ beliefs and practices were controversial and complex.

The importance of teachers’ beliefs and teaching behaviour has been studied in several key areas of interest to ELT professionals. Significant contributions to understanding the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices have been made in ESL, especially in English speaking countries such as the United Kingdom (Phipps, 2010). In the field of learner autonomy in language education, there is a lack of research on the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding to learner autonomy, especially in Vietnamese EFL context, a non-western-culture country. Thus, this is a particular gap that the current study
addressed: *What is the association between teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy in the Vietnamese contexts?*

**The Triadic Reciprocity Model**

Pham (2005) suggested that researchers should investigate and explore the underlying reasons, especially contextual factors for this relationship. With this suggestion in mind the current study explored teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in the Vietnamese educational context with particular reference to Bandura’s (1986) theoretical ‘model of triadic reciprocity’ in which behaviour, cognition and other personal factors, and the environment have a relationship with each other. This model suggests an interactional causation in which environmental events, personal factors, and behaviors all operate as interacting determinants of each other. The current research employs the model of ‘triadic reciprocity’ to explore the relationships and the translation of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy into their actual teaching practice (behaviour) in the Vietnamese educational context (environment). Figure 2.1 illustrates the relationships of triadic reciprocity explored in the current research.

Figure 2.1  
*The relationships of triadic reciprocity for learner autonomy*

![Image of triangle diagram with labels: Teachers’ beliefs, Learner Autonomy, Teaching Practice, Vietnamese teaching-learning environment.]

In this model, the term reciprocal refers to the mutual actions between causal factors. There are several important points to consider in these relationships within the diagram. First of all, “reciprocity does not mean symmetry in the strength of bidirectional influences. Nor is the patterning and strength of mutual influences fixed in reciprocal causation” (Bandura, 1986, p. 24). In other words, the influences of the three factors in the model above (teachers’
beliefs, teaching practices and the Vietnamese learning environment) will vary for different activities, individuals and circumstances. For example, Bandura (1986) clarified that “when situational constraints are weak, personal factors serve as the predominant influence in the regulatory system” (p. 24). That is, environmental factors may have more impact on the possibility of facilitating learner autonomy than teachers’ beliefs or teaching practices. The focus of the current study is on autonomy in the classroom so it was important to explore possible situational constraints that may influence the development of learner autonomy but equally important to explore teachers’ beliefs which are central in the integrating system. Secondly, the three factors in the triadic reciprocality model do not interact with each other simultaneously as a holistic entity. Reciprocity does not mean simultaneity of influence (Bandura, 1986). The bidirectional influence between each two sets of factors take place at different times. Interacting factors work their mutual effects sequentially over variable time courses. For example, in relation to the current study, the influence of teachers’ beliefs on behaviour may not instantly change the teaching-learning environment. Additionally, the influence of the context on teachers’ beliefs and their behaviour may happen at different times.

In accordance with the concept of learner autonomy, autonomous learners need to be able to decide on their learning needs and goals, identifying learning resources, choose and carry out proper learning strategies, organise learning tasks and self-evaluate their learning results. All of which will be very hard or even impossible to be accomplished by the learners in the highly competitive learning environment controlled by exams as the “didactic learning modes” with the teacher as its centre (Nguyen, 2010). In Vietnam, however, though the reform of university English pedagogy has been in practice for years, teacher seem to still adhere to a traditional approach to English teaching, where they are the centre of the teaching-learning process, and where they emphasise knowledge of English over competence to use English (Dang, 2010; Pham, 2009; Trinh, 2005). The assessment system designs and public examinations encourage students learn by rote (Pham, 2009; Trinh, 2005).

Research indicates that many factors mediate and influence the direction and magnitude of the relationship between beliefs and practices. Ajzen’s (1987) theory of planned behaviour focuses on behavioural intentions, i.e. how determined a person is to do something, and these intentions derive from attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. According to Ajzen, attitudes are a person’s evaluative response to something and are
determined by behavioural beliefs. For example, if a teacher believes that getting students to take control of their learning will involve more work but strongly believes it will benefit the student, that teacher’s attitude will probably be favorable to fostering learner autonomy. Subjective norms are concerned with what a person believes significant others will think. For example, if a teacher believes that his/her boss or colleagues will approve of introducing learner autonomy, then this will positively influence that teacher’s intentions. The third influential factor is perceived behavioural control: the degree of control the teacher believes he/she has in getting students to accept autonomous learning. Control factors may be internal (i.e. skills and abilities, or external, for example materials, equipment, time, or institutional support). It is important to note that Ajzen is referring to perceptions of control here and underlying these perceptions are beliefs about past experiences, anticipated difficulties, and so on. It is also important to note that these beliefs may be inaccurate or irrational. However, all of these factors presented in this model affect the intentions that lead to one’s behaviour. The key thing to note here is that there is a great difference between intention and actual expectation to do something. Moreover, this model just shows a one-way relation (the influence of beliefs on behavior).

Little (2007) has described three salient dimensions of autonomous language teaching in the following way: to be an autonomous teacher, one must be an autonomous learner; professionally, autonomous teachers must be able to apply to their teaching the same reflective and self-managing processes that they apply to their learning; and autonomous teachers must learn how to produce and manage teaching the many varieties of target language discourse that are to be found in the language classroom. All this is influenced in one way or another by the social and cultural context (school, society) which is filtered by teachers’ individual lives (i.e., both professional and personal). For example, some teachers are autonomous in their professional skills, but cannot employ these skills in the classroom owing to the constraints and limitations inherent in the educational context to which they belong. Other teachers may not be able to employ practices for promoting autonomy in accordance with their wishes due to their lack of skills or shortage of time available for preparation. Still others do not employ practices for promoting autonomy simply because they believe in the effectiveness of one particular method for a particular objective (e.g. entrance exams) and thus have no intention of changing their methods. However, Little (1991) argued that learner autonomy depends on teacher autonomy because learner autonomy
does not mean learning without the teacher but, instead, there is the interdependence between teacher and the learning. In short, it is clear that the social context has an influence on the translation from teachers’ beliefs into their instructional practices.

2.6 SUMMARY

It is clear that there is a gap in literature that needs to be filled in that there is a need to develop an understanding of the association between teachers’ beliefs and teaching practices in relation to fostering learner autonomy. The review and discussion in this chapter suggests that teachers’ beliefs must be considered as the foremost factor to foster learner autonomy in the Vietnamese context. The review of the literature also shows that in order to discover and understand teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy, there is a requirement to examine what teachers say, intend, and do, in relation to facilitating learner autonomy. Therefore, this research explored Vietnamese EFL teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and investigated the alignment between their beliefs and their teaching practices. The following chapter will describe the research design and methods utilised in the current research.
Chapter 3: Research Design

Chapter 2 outlined the existing research on teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and introduced the importance of constructivism as the theoretical framework for the current study. Chapter 3 provides a description of, and rationale for, the chosen research design and methodology (Section 3.1). The subsequent sections describe the research design (Section 3.2), a description of Phase 1 of the research (Section 3.3) and Phase 2 of the research (Section 3.4) including a discussion of the data collection and analysis methods that were employed. Finally, issues of trustworthiness, the ethical considerations of the research and its potential problems and limitations are described (Section 3.5).

3.1 RATIONALE FOR CASE STUDY APPROACH

Researchers must consider the notion of ‘fit for purpose’ when deciding on the methodological approach to be taken for the research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The approach taken in the current research was case study, which incorporated both quantitative (Phase 1) and qualitative data (Phase 2) using a mixed method design. A case study approach was adopted for three key reasons: it fits well within the constructivist theoretical perspective as mentioned in Chapter 2; it provides rigour and depth to the research approach; and it fills a gap in the literature in relation to learner autonomy within the Vietnamese educational context.

Robert Yin (1994) and Robert Stake (1995) are considered as two main proponents of case study methodology and the two represent very different approaches to case study design and implementation (Wainman, 2010). The arguments within case study research approach mainly rest on the issues of the generalisation of the case study research findings, or how the study can be applied in other contexts. It is believed that Stake’s approach focuses mainly on an individual case study which does not seek generalisability of results (Stake, 1995) while Yin’s (1994) approach includes generalisability where the study holds value for others in a similar context (Wainman, 2010). As the current study explores teachers’ beliefs of learner autonomy and their teaching practices in relation to their beliefs it was deemed appropriate that the kind of case study as described by Yin was most suitable: “Case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between
phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (p. 3). It is understood from Yin’s definition that one of the characteristics of case study research is the combination of a variety of data collection methods such as interviews, observation and document analysis.

Merriam (1998) stated that a case could be an individual, a unit or a program. Yin (1994) emphasised that case study researchers must select cases based on their ability to provide the most relevant and usable information. A case study must be described and bounded in time and place (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 1998). In the present study, the case was a group of Vietnamese teachers’ beliefs and practices in relation to the concept of learner autonomy.

Case study helps to give a rich and in-depth investigation of a complex research problem in comparison to other research. Previous research on teacher’s beliefs employed methods such as repertory grids (Munby, 1982), interviews (Vaino, 2009). Stimulated recall interviews (Hoffman, 2009; Lyle, 2003) have also been used to explore teachers’ beliefs in action. The current research adopted a case study approach to explore Vietnamese teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in relation to their actual teaching practices and to explore factors that affect translating their beliefs into actions. This research design for the exploration of learner autonomy has not been done before, therefore, the research fills the gap that previous research in this field has lacked.

Phase 1 of the research aimed to gain general information about Vietnamese teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in relation to the research problem and helped select the cases for the second phase. Phase 2 of the research explored teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in relation to their teaching practices. Determining teachers’ beliefs was important because if teachers are to understand how to assist students to become autonomous learners, then it becomes critical to learn more about the beliefs and in decision-making in these educational settings. The two phases of the research were done through a mixed method of research, as described below.

3.2 MIXED METHODS DESIGN

Mixed methods research, mixed research, integrative research (Creswell, 2012; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) or combined method research (Sandelowski, 2000) is recognised as the third major research approach or research paradigm used today (Bryman, 2007; Doyle &
Mixed methods research has been defined in a number of ways, but in general, it involves quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods and approaches in a single study. The current research incorporated both quantitative (Phase 1) and qualitative data (Phase 2).

Recently, with the expansion of mixed methods research, the philosophical underpinnings of mixed methods is widely discussed, and questions about whether multiple worldviews or worldviews that relate to the methods used in a particular study are valued and used within the mixed methods community (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Sandelowski, 2000; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher, & Perez-Prado, 2003; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2006). This has raised the issue of whether the paradigms can be mixed in a single study, which has led to the two opposite viewpoints. First, there have been some arguments for the impossibility of combining the worldviews. For example, Sale, Lohfeld and Brazil (2002) suggest that “qualitative and quantitative researchers do not, in fact, study the same phenomenon” because “quantitative and qualitative methods represent two different paradigms, they are incommensurate” (p.50). The logic being used here was that the researcher, in using mixed methods research, was mixing paradigms. However, this stance has been described as the purist stance (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Sanderlowski (200), on the other hand, argues against the purist stance, “because techniques are tied neither to paradigm nor to methods, combinations at technique level permit innovative uses of a range of techniques for variety of purposes” (p. 248). For example, Sanderlowski (2000) argued that it is not possible to combine a view of reality as singular and objective (positivist) when views of it are both individually and socially constructed (constructivism) and so one method for research is not adequate to collect the various perspectives of reality. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argued that what works in research is what is useful and should be used, regardless of any philosophical assumptions, paradigmatic assumptions, or any other type of assumptions. In other words, researchers must consider the notion of ‘fit for purpose’ when deciding on the methodological approach to be taken in the research (Hesse-Biber, 2010). It is clear that researchers have now taken varied stances on incorporating paradigms into mixed method but advise that each paradigm needs to be honoured and their combined use must contribute to healthy tensions and new insights (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Greene & Caracelli, 2007).
In general, mixed methods researchers choose a sequence of data collection using concurrent or sequential approaches or some combination of these (Creswell, 2012; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). For the current research, quantitative data was collected first through a researcher-generated survey (Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB), which was then followed by the collection of qualitative case study data. This mixed method design was used for two major reasons. Firstly, Creswell (2008) stated that a quantitative study provides a description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of the respondents. As mentioned before, in order to give a general picture of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and identify the sample for the second more in-depth studies, quantitative data was first collected to address the research question: What are Vietnamese EFL teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy? Through this process, the quantitative data was analysed to explore how teachers describe their beliefs about learner autonomy. “Results from this phase can inform how a large population views an issue and the diversity of these views” (Creswell, 2012, p.13). Then, to gain understanding of the relationships between their beliefs about learner autonomy and their practices in order to address the research question: What is the association between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and teachers’ behaviours in fostering learner autonomy in teaching English as a foreign language at universities in Vietnam?, qualitative data was collected in Phase 2 of the research through a case study approach. The basic principle of a qualitative study is that “qualitative relies more on the views of the participants in the study and less on the direction identified in the literature by the researchers” (Creswell, 2012, p. 17). In particular, an exploratory mixed methods research design was utilised to address the research questions because it provides rigor and depth for the study. As discussed in Chapter 2, in the literature on learner autonomy in language education, there has been little research exploring teachers’ beliefs or perspectives about learner autonomy utilising mixed methods research. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) used a questionnaire to explore teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in Oman; Chan (2003) explored Hong Kong teachers’ perspectives about learner autonomy using a survey and follow-up interview. This led to the findings of teachers’ espoused beliefs about learner autonomy, for example, what teachers said to the researchers, not teachers’ enacted beliefs; that is, what they did. Chan’s research emphasised that in order to explore a person’s beliefs, it is necessary to measure these beliefs on what they say, intend, and do (Borg, 2001; Pajares, 1992).
One of the most difficult challenges for the mixed methods researchers is how to analyse data collected from quantitative and qualitative research (Bryan, 2007; Yin, 2006). For example, Bryan (2007) stated that mixed methods researchers do not always bring their findings together and that quantitative and qualitative components are treated as separate domains. This is seen as a problem that has been debated a great deal in the literature. Yin (2006) claimed that at the most obvious level, lack of integration suggests that mixed methods researchers may not be making the most of the data collected and the research is in danger of becoming multiple, related studies rather than a single study. Bryman (2007) suggested that bringing the two sources of data together has the potential to offer insights that could not otherwise be gleaned and it is valuable to consider whether the findings suggest interesting contrasts or help to clarify each other. Therefore, as discussed above, for the current research, the quantitative and qualitative data sets were collected separately in a sequential mixed method design before finally comparing and contrasting the results.

3.3 PHASE 1 OF THE RESEARCH

3.3.1 Justification for survey design for Phase 1 of the research

The research instrument for the first phase of the study was a researcher-generated survey to address the first research question: What are Vietnamese EFL teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy? Survey designs are defined as “procedures in quantitative research in which investigations administer a survey to a sample or a population of people to determine the attitudes, opinions, behaviours, or characteristics of the population” (Creswell, 2012, p. 376). Surveys are a popular research instrument in education for its various applications and advantages such as the unprecedented efficiency in terms of researcher time, researcher effort, and financial resources (Dornyei, 2003; Frazer & Lawley, 2000); helping “identify important beliefs and attitudes of individuals” (Creswell, 2012, p. 376); and for fast and straightforward data processing, especially by using modern computer software (Creswell, 2012; Dornyei, 2003).

For the current research, the researcher generated a survey to explore teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in the Vietnamese contexts. Items on the survey were constructed from the literature reviewed on teachers’ beliefs and learner autonomy and from previous research done on learner autonomy. A survey was chosen for Phase 1 of the research because it provided pre-coded answers which allowed for collocation and analysis of a large amount
of data by the researcher (Dornyei, 2007). Respondents did not need to spend a lot of time working out how to express their opinion (Dornyei, 2007). In addition, concerning the time and resource limitations of a PhD student, and in order to meet the purposes of the first phase of the research, a survey was considered as the most suitable instrument to use.

Previous studies about learner autonomy using a survey (Alsaq-si, 2009; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Chan, 2003; Sakai, Takagi, & Chu, 2010; Yildirim, 2008) had one commonality - the researchers appeared to have assumed that the investigated teachers understood the term learner autonomy. Rather than exploring this, researchers have tended to focus on discovering the attitudes and perceptions of a particular aspect of learner autonomy. The research reviewed in the literature showed generally that teachers had positive attitudes towards learner autonomy. The current researcher did not assume an understanding of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in the Vietnamese educational contexts because this term is quite a new one in Vietnam recently mandated by the government.

3.3.2 Survey construction

To collect valuable data, researchers have to pay attention to the construction of the survey they use (Creswell, 2012; Hinkin, 1995). As suggested by Hinkin (1995), “keeping a measure short is an effective means of minimizing response biases caused by boredom or fatigue” (p. 109) and that “at least four items per scale are needed to test the homogeneity of items within each latent construct”. The researcher identified from the literature various aspects of learner autonomy which were compiled as four sections in the design of the survey. Each section was broken down into approximately four to six items (see Table 3.1 below). Thus, in total there were 26 items on the survey including five opening survey items, and 04 subscales including (1) Sense of Responsibility, (2) Beliefs about Students, (3) Constraints to Autonomy, (4) Fostering Autonomy. The last section of the survey was designed to provide demographic information about the teachers, which provided an overall picture of EFL teachers in Vietnam. The survey was also used to select the cases for the case study research (Phase 2). The survey was written in English and called: Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB).
Table 3.1
Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB)
Summary of the Survey Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>No of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sense of Responsibility</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Beliefs about Students</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Constraints to autonomy</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fostering Autonomy</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As defined in Chapter 2, the working definition of learner autonomy used in the current research is learner’s willingness and ability to take responsibility to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate his/her learning in tasks that are constructed in negotiation with and support from the teacher which draws upon definitions for learner autonomy (Holec, 1981; Benson, 1997; Little, 1995; Nguyen, 2010). In order to have a general picture of the participants’ beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy, questions in section 1 were designed to investigate teachers’ definition of the term learner autonomy; questions in sections 2 and 3 were designed to investigate teachers’ roles or responsibility for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating in the class; and how the participants viewed their learners’ abilities to take responsibility to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate his/her learning in tasks. Finally, to understand the participants’ current situation in relation to learner autonomy, questions on the constraints that they believed they were facing as well as their suggested approaches to foster learner autonomy were developed in sections 4 and 5.

This study used a Likert-type scale. These types of scales are the most useful in behavioural research because the use of Likert-scales can help avoid loading participant with immense work and ensure an overall view of the focus of the research (Hinkin, 1995). Likert-type scales can vary in the number of scale points (e.g. 4 or 7 points) as well as the descriptors. For the current study, the unbalanced scale (5) was used because a 5-point Likert-type scale is widely accepted as a proxy interval level of measurement in line with common practice in educational research (Dornyei, 2003).
3.3.3 Survey administration

The researcher used group distribution for this survey. Group distribution is a form of data collection in survey research in which the investigator delivers a survey to different groups of participants face-to-face (Dornyei, 2007). In particular, for the current research, the researcher went to different universities in Hanoi to deliver the survey with the support from the administrative staff at these universities. Many researchers prefer using mailed or electronic surveys (internet-based surveys) because of their speed and accessibility (Saris & Gallhofer, 2007). They can be fast and easy to conduct data collection with a high response rate and a high quality of response. However, emails are not a preferred method of academic communication in Vietnam, using e-mail or internet-based surveys was not ideal for the current study. In contrast to Saris and Gallhofer (2007), Dornyei (2003) described that the response rate of surveys using mail delivery is 30%. The researcher felt that this low response rate may have the potential to undermine the reliability of the data. In contrast, one-to-one administration can bring some benefits such as the return rate of the surveys is better than e-mail administration and it encourages cooperation between the researcher and respondents as the researcher has a chance to explain the purposes of the study to participants (Creswell, 2012; Dornyei, 2003; Oppenheim, 2003). The administrative staff at ten universities in Hanoi helped the researcher deliver and collect the survey from EFL teachers at his/her university. The response rate for Phase 1 of the research was 78%.

3.3.4 Participants in Phase 1 of the research

To identify any issues relating to the use of jargon or terminology in the survey that might be confusing for teachers, the survey items were trialled with five Vietnamese university teachers of English who were doing their PhD or EdD course in Australia. Items that were confusing were reworded before a pilot survey was conducted to verify that the items and procedure were well understood and that the test did not yield obvious bias effects (Dornyei, 2003; Saris & Gallhofer, 2007). In the pilot study, the participants were 12 teachers of English at a big university in Hanoi; the pilot study was conducted in February, 2012. This number allowed the researcher to conduct some meaningful item analysis and make revisions deemed necessary before formally administering the survey for the research. The pilot survey was delivered by an independent investigator to avoid any researcher bias in the process (e.g. if any of the participants knew the researcher this may have had a potential bearing on their
responses) (Dornyei, 2003). The investigator asked participants to mark any problems on the survey, such as poorly worded questions, items that did not make sense, or if it took an excessive amount of time to complete the survey. Based on their feedback, the researcher then revised the instrument before sending it out as a final survey.

As suggested in the literature issues of sample size need to be considered when using survey. An important consideration in relation to sample size is the item-to-response ratio; that is the number of responses needed per item on the survey in relation to the number of participants (sample size) to address the issues of reliability and validity. Hinkin (1995) suggested that the number of items range from 1:4 (for every 1 item there needs to be 4 participant responses) to at least 1:10 for each set of scales. Based on the number of items for this study (26), the researcher attempted to meet at least the minimum number of item-to-ration responses of 1:4 (26 x 4 = 104). This number would allow the researcher to conduct some meaningful analysis of the data.

To meet the ratio of participants per survey item numbers, convenience sampling was employed. After gaining the consent from the Governing board of ten universities in Hanoi, the researcher invited teachers of English to participate in the survey. With the help of the administrators of these universities, ten volunteer teachers were selected and were responsible for delivering and collecting the surveys at their universities. The survey was delivered to 249 EFL teachers at ten universities in Hanoi. From this sample size, 188 EFL teachers responded completely to the survey, which produced a response rate of approximately 78%. Of the 188 respondents in Phase 1, 78 agreed to participate in Phase 2 of the research. The time needed for this process from pilot study to completion of the survey was four weeks (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pilot Test</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>01 university</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Research study</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>10 universities</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that among 188 respondents, there were 26 participants (14.1%) who did not indicate their gender. Of those who identified their gender (N = 158), 150
(81.5%) were female and 8 (4.3%) were male. Similarly, there were 26 participants (14.1%) of the sample did not indicate their years of experience. Experiences ranged from 1 to 25 years with approximately 56% of the sample with 5-year experience or less and 88% having 10-year experience or less. With regard to the 8 male teachers, 6 had 1 to 5-year experience and 2 had 6 to 10-year experience. Table 3.3 summarises the demographic information of the participants in Phase 1 of the current study.

Table 3.3  
**Demographic information of the participants in Phase 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Non-indicated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of experiences</th>
<th>1-5 years</th>
<th>6-10 years</th>
<th>11-15 years</th>
<th>16-25 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.5 **Data analysis**

Data yielded by the survey, the *Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB)*, were entered into a data file (SPSS Version 21) and preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure the accuracy of the data, to detect any missing values, and to assess the reliability of the scale. The accuracy of the data was examined by using ‘sort cases’ in ascending order for each variable. This process arranged the values of a variable from the smallest to the largest number, enabling the researcher to easily detect out-of-range or misnumbered cases.

The data file was then examined visually for missing data. The responses of four participants were problematic. Participant #109 had not responded to any survey items while Participant #014 had only responded to four items (<20% of the survey). In addition, two participants did not respond to entire subscales of the survey; namely, Participant #012 did not respond to any items in subscale 1 (*Sense of Responsibility*) and subscale 2 (*Beliefs about Students*) while Participant #065 did not respond to any items in subscale 3 (*Constraints to Autonomy*). It was decided that these last two participants were probably struggling to understand the construct of learner autonomy. As a consequence the responses of these two
participants (Participants #012 and #065) as well as those of Participants #109 and #014 were deleted from the data set. With these four participants removed from the data, the total number of participants for Phase 1 of the research was: 184.

Further visual inspection of the data file showed that an additional 21 responses were missing across a range of survey items as follows: Items 2, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, and 21 (one response each); Item 5 (two responses); Item 11 (three responses) and Items 15 and 21 (five responses each). Accordingly, missing values were replaced by variable means (‘Series Means’). Note was also made that the three items with high non-response rates (Items 11, 15 and 19) should be examined further (reliability analyses) and interpretation of results from these items would likely need to be made with caution. Table 3.4 summarises the descriptive statistics – means, standard deviations and ranges – in relation to the data from the Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB) survey.

Table 3.4
Means and Standard Deviations for Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>76.38</td>
<td>6.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Beliefs about Responsibility</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20.09</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ Ability to be Autonomous</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.90</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraints to Fostering Learner Autonomy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.10</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaches to Fostering Learner Autonomy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24.29</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.6 Reliability of the survey

The reliability (internal consistency) of the Likert-scale survey and its subscales was calculated by means of SPSS scale reliability analysis. The reliability of the total scale (LALL:TB ), a Cronbach’s α coefficient of .68, was judged to be less than adequate (< .70) and thus only suitable for exploratory purposes. Given the concerns regarding the number of missing data (3 to 5 responses each) for Questions 11, 15 and 19, the reliability of the survey was recalculated without these items. The reliability of the 18-item survey was .67; thus no further action was taken.

Reliability analyses were then conducted for the subscales. As shown in Table 3.5, the coefficients for the four subscales of the LALL:TB – Sense of Responsibility (α = .60), Beliefs about Students (α = .71), Constraints to Autonomy (α = .53), and Approaches to Autonomy (α
varied from adequate (> .70) to less than adequate (< .70); the latter being only suitable for exploratory purposes.

Table 3.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Subscales</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs</td>
<td>Teachers’ Beliefs about Responsibility</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students’ Ability to be Autonomous</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constraints to Fostering Learner Autonomy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approaches to Fostering Learner Autonomy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted and results indicated that there were no significant differences between female and male teachers with regard to scores on the LALL:TB and its four subscales. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Bonferroni adjustment for post hoc comparisons was conducted indicating that there were no significant differences among the experience groups (1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years & 16-25 years) with regard to scores on the LALL:TB and its four subscales. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Bonferroni adjustment for post hoc comparisons was conducted and there were no significant differences among the different university groups with regard to scores on the LALL:TB and its four subscales.

As mentioned above, one of the purposes of Phase 1 of the current research was to help the research select the participants for Phase 2 of the study, one important conclusion drawn in relation to selecting the participants for Phase 2 of the study was that the researchers could choose the four participants for Phase 2 of the study randomly among all 78 survey respondents who indicated that they would be happy to continue with the study.

3.4 PHASE 2 OF THE RESEARCH- CASE STUDY

Phase 2 of the research responded to the three following research questions:

1. *What are Vietnamese EFL teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy?*
2. *What are teachers’ actual teaching practices regarding learner autonomy?*
3. *What is the association between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and teachers’ actual teaching practice?*
The next sections describe the methods and techniques utilised in Phase 2 of the research. Semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall interviews, video-taped classroom observations, and field notes were used to collect data in this phase of the research.

### 3.4.1 Justification for case study design

Phase 2 of the research aimed to explore teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in more depth. As the current study explores teachers’ beliefs of learner autonomy and their teaching practices in relation to their beliefs it was deemed appropriate that the kind of case study as described by Yin (1994) was most suitable: “Case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used“ (p. 3). It is understood from Yin’s definition that one of the characteristics of case study research is the combination of a variety of data collection methods such as interviews, observation and document analysis.

Phase 2 of the research consisted of four participants who each formed a case as a sub-group in the research design. Four cases are considered to be an ideal number for a researcher to manage the data and time (Creswell, 2005) and also to gain rich enough data for the research. Within the research, this phase of study had two main purposes. The first purpose was to record these four teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and autonomous teaching and learning. Determining their beliefs was important because these teachers were responsible for developing autonomy in their students. The second purpose of the study was to investigate how teachers’ beliefs were reflected in their classroom practices and to determine what practices, if any, were common among them.

### 3.4.2 Participants in the Phase 2 of the research

In principle, because the focus of this research was Vietnamese university EFL teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy, the participants for the interviews had to be Vietnamese and teach English as a foreign language at a university in Vietnam. Four teachers were chosen using random sampling to participate in Phase 2 of the study. This smaller number of participants was deemed manageable by the researcher for inclusion as a case to explore the connections between Vietnamese teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and their teaching practices in relation to fostering learner autonomy.
For the purpose of the current research, the four participants were given pseudonyms: Thu, Ngan, Bich, and Ha. Among them, Ha and Bich’s students were not students of English as a major subject but students who had to learn English as a compulsory subject to complete their degree. The students’ English levels were deemed Pre-Intermediate because they had learnt English at high school and the faculty used the course book for Pre-Intermediate students. Students of participants Thu and Ngan came from Universities where English was the preliminary entry requirement for the main course program. Their students needed an IELTS score of 6 and they targeted for that. All participants were female lecturers. All had a Master’s Degree in Teaching English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL). The average number of years teaching was 14, however the number of years ranged from between 6 years and 25 years. Table 3.6 describes the participants who took part in the case study phase of the research.

Table 3.6
Demographics of Case Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Degree/Position</th>
<th>No. Yrs teaching</th>
<th>Course Content of teaching</th>
<th>No. Students in observed class</th>
<th>English level of observed students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master in TESOL / Lecturer</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>IELTS preparation course</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master in TESOL (Australia)/ Lecturer</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>IELTS preparation course</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bich</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master in TESOL / Lecturer</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>General English</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Pre-Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master in TESOL / Lecturer</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>General English</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Pre-Intermediate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.3 Interviews

Interviewing is considered one of the most common tools in educational research (Fryer et al., 2012; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Oppenheim, 2003, Seidman, 2006; Tierney & Dilley, 2001). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) define interviews as an interchange of views between the interviewer and interviewee(s), conversing about a theme of common interest. Seidman
(2006) stated that “the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 9). Interviewing is considered an extremely rich data collection method and a primary means of understanding peoples’ beliefs in greater depth. One of the most important sources of case study information is the interview because case studies are about human affairs (Yin, 2012). Therefore, interviewing was used in the current research to collect data to ascertain teachers’ beliefs of learner autonomy as it is practiced in Vietnamese universities.

_Individual interviews_ or a face-to-face interviewing was conducted in this study because it allowed detailed exploration of ideas and concepts in relation to the individual teacher’s beliefs about learner autonomy. Through individual interviews, the interviewer can pose questions that allow the respondent to explore their ideas more in-depth and avoid the influence of group dynamics and suppression of opinions by peers as would be found with focus group interviews (Johnson, 2001; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

With the purpose of having the participants communicate as much as possible about their beliefs and behaviour in relation to learner autonomy, _semi-structured interviews_ were used. Semi-structured interviews use guides or probing questions so that information from different interviews is directly comparable (Kvale, 2007). The interview guide has a standard introduction and conclusion, but allows flexibility to vary the order of intervening questions to provide the natural flow of conversation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Initial interviews were conducted prior to any classroom observation to get background information about the teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy. Follow-up in-depth interviews were conducted after each classroom observation as stimulated recall interviews (SRI) (Calderhead, 1981). This kind of interviewing technique was chosen as it allowed the teachers to expand on describing their beliefs while watching these beliefs enacted in their teaching practices. These interview protocols are presented in detail in the following sections.

**Initial Interviews**

An initial, individual interview was recorded with each of the four participants. The purpose of the _initial interview_ was to collect background information about teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy including teachers’ interpretations of the term learner autonomy, teachers’ approaches to fostering learner autonomy, teachers’ beliefs about their roles in the
class, teachers’ beliefs about their student’ roles in the class, the characteristics of autonomous learners as well as the constraints of learner autonomy. The semi-structured interview protocol can be found in Appendix B, however, the list of questions included:

How do you define the term “learner autonomy”?
What are the characteristics of autonomous learners?
What are your roles in your class?

The data collected from initial interviews was analysed utilising an interpretivist, constant comparative approach and provided the framework for observations of teaching activities in the classes through a stimulated recall procedure. In a constant comparative procedure raw data is formed into indicators or small segments of information from different people, over different times. These indicators are then grouped into several codes which then form categories. The researcher must constantly compare indicators to indicators, codes to codes and categories to categories in order to eliminate redundancy in the data (Cresswell, 2012). Utilising an interpretivist approach, the researcher “…attempts to understand phenomena by accessing the meaning and value that study participants assign to them” (Lapan, Quararoli, & Riemer, 2012, p.8). Because beliefs are not tangible things but personal ideas of the teachers, the research needed to utilise an interpretivist approach to explore teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy.

The participants were asked to give information about their practices regarding learner autonomy, that is, how they foster learner autonomy in their class. In an example of an interpretivist approach: Ngan said in her initial interview that she adopted practices to foster learner autonomy. Through stimulated recall interviews she observed her teaching to see how or if she demonstrated these practices in her classroom, which then allowed her to confirm or revise her beliefs about her teaching practices in relation to learner autonomy. Thus, the initial interviews played a critical role in informing the next step in the data collection, the stimulated recall interviews. For the constant comparative approach, the data from phase 1 and phase 2 of the current research were analysed to determine the consistency or inconsistency between the two sources of the data. In addition, under each category, the data from each case were compared with each other to see the similarities and the differences.

*Stimulated recall interviews*
Video stimulated recall (SR) is a research technique in which research participants view a video sequence and are then invited to reflect on their thinking during the videoed event (Calderhead, 1981; Dempsey, 2010; Hoffman, 2003; Lyle, 2003; Macrland, 1984; O’Brien, 1993). In general, the technique of stimulated recall gives participants a chance to view themselves in action in order to help them recall their thoughts about what is happening in the screen. The most popular SR data collection method used in educational research is stimulated recall interviews (SRI) (Dempsey, 2010; Lyle, 2003). This data collection method involves interviewing individuals by playing them a visual recording of their teaching practices with probing questions to assist them in their reflections in the interview. In the current study, teachers viewed video recordings of their teaching practices and discussed their role in assisting students to become autonomous learners. Where needed, verbal prompts were used by the researcher to have participants reflect more deeply about what they were watching themselves doing. It is believed that this technique helps the researcher gain the data on teachers’ actual behaviours and their thoughts (Dempsey, 2010).

Despite its popularity, SRI raises methodological issues for researchers (Calderhead, 1981; Theobald, 2008), particularly novice researchers in education. The main criticisms are related to the difficulty of collecting the full thoughts of the participant (Calderhead, 1981; Lyle, 2003); and the participant may be describing his or her feeling to what they currently see and not recalling their thoughts or feelings at the time of an actual episode or interaction (Calderhead, 1981; Lyle, 2003). Concerning these potential problems for the current research, the researcher developed a procedure which will be presented in the following sections.

**Step 1- Preparation**

Calderhead (1981) outlined factors which may influence the extent to which teachers recall and report their thoughts. For example, “some teachers may be anxious and stressful when they view their teaching... They may be distracted, at least initially, by their own physical characteristics and focus on talking about this rather than reflecting on what they were doing during the lesson” (p. 214). To address this problem, Calderhead (1981) suggested the establishment of rapport between participating teachers and the researcher and to let the teachers get familiar with the stimulated recall procedure. Concerning this, for the current research, the researcher did two important things for preparation. First, the researcher conducted one “dry-run” (O’Brien, 1993, p. 217) of the videotaping procedure in each class.
This allowed the teachers to view themselves teaching before the actual data collection, to become familiar with having the camera in the classroom and with the process of being viewed. In the days leading up to the data collection, students in the selected classes also needed to become familiar with the presence in the class of the researcher, who was also the video camera operator (O’Brien, 1993). Through the dry-run, the researcher found that it was also an opportunity for her as the camera operator to become familiar with setting up and operating the equipment in the classroom as a way to avoid potential technical problems during data collection. Data from the dry-run video was not used in the study.

For the second preparation procedure, the researcher conducted preliminary sessions for the four participants before starting the data collection in the class. Each preliminary session lasted approximately half an hour before the day of the initial SRI interview. The participants were introduced to the techniques of SRI and to what the researcher was going to do in their class and how the interview would be conducted after each video observation. Participants were then invited to watch the ‘dry-run’ video and participate in a mock interview, recalling their thoughts. It is critical to note that the participants for this research were Vietnamese who have been depicted in earlier research as culturally passive in communication. Indeed, the researcher explored some limitations when conducting the trial stimulated recall interview with the participants in the dry-run sessions. For example, one of the participants just focused on her physical appearance and forgot to recall what she was thinking during the teaching episode. Another participant kept talking about something else, not the event. The third participant just described her activities, but not her thinking while engaging in the activities. The fourth teacher only talked when she was asked questions, otherwise she kept watching in silence. While the dry-run interview session allowed the participants to understand the SRI method better, the researcher found out that the participants were really passive and dependent; they did not talk when they viewed the videos. Thus, the researcher decided not to use the pure version of SRI. Instead, the researcher decided that it was necessary to pick up some important excerpts from the video recordings and develop an interview protocol for the stimulated recall interview (SRI). (The sample Interview protocol for SRI can be found in the appendix B). The interview protocol provided a consistent framework for the interviews to which both the teachers and researcher could work within. Thus, the teachers were assured that the questions they would be asked would be directly related to their own teaching
practices and they were in control of how much or what kind of information they wanted to provide.

**Step 2- Video-recording**

As suggested by O’Brien (1993), for the current research, two cameras were set up in the classroom. One camera was used to video the teacher and any other major instructional resources (such as slides, blackboard, etc.) and the second camera was used to video the students and their activities. Figure 3.1 below outlines the positioning of the cameras in the classroom. Camera one was positioned at the front of the class where the teacher generally stands to teach the lesson. This placement allowed the researcher to capture the actions solely of the teacher as none of the participants moved far away from this position to circulate around the classroom during lessons. Camera two was positioned at the back of the class. The placement of this camera allowed the researcher to capture the whole of the class dynamics during class time. The time set aside to conduct the training course and to complete a dry-run of videotaping a session allowed participants to become more relaxed by the researcher’s presence in the class and subsequently to be involved in the research.

O’Brien (1993) stated that the number of lessons video-recorded is largely dependent upon the availability of resources and time with experience showing that the average is videotaping about four lessons over a two to three weeks period. In the current study, three lessons were videoed with each teacher, plus a ‘dry-run’ in each class. In total, the current study included sixteen videotapes (including one ‘dry-run’ video and three video recordings for each class).
Step 3-Stimulated recall interviews (SRI)

As described earlier, the purpose of the stimulated recall interview was to allow the teachers to think more deeply about their teaching behaviours (O’Brien, 1993; Lyle, 2003). SRIs were conducted one day after the video recordings as suggested by O’Brien (1993) to allow better recall by the participants. In the SRI, the interviewer and the interviewee watched the videos together, so the researcher could prompt the interviewee if necessary. Samples of the interviewing questions included:

What were your thoughts when you did this activity?

What were you thinking when you decided to do this?
Can you explain why you decided to do this?

The time needed for each SRI ranged from 30 minutes to 60 minutes which was the length of total important episodes from each observed lesson. In addition, O’Brien (1993) recommended recording short sessions so that the participants do not become tired and distracted as they view their teaching. Each of the four participants participated in a dry-run session in their classroom, 3 video tapings/observations and 3 follow-up SRIs one day after each videotaping. In total there were 12 SRIs conducted with 4 participants. The procedure used for the SRI is outlined in figure 3.2 below.

Figure 3.2
*Procedure of using stimulated recall interviews in the study*

---

**Final Interviews**

A final interview was carried out with each participant on completion of the SRI and observation phases of the research. These final interviews were conducted to understand
further possible connections between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and their actual teaching practices (Johnson, 2001; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and to explore more in-depth teachers’ beliefs about the issues. All interviews were conducted within one week after the last SRI with each participant. The researcher used an interview protocol to interview the participants. (The full interview protocol for this interview can be found in the appendix B). Samples of the interviews questions as follows:

  How do you define learner autonomy?
  How autonomous are your current students?
  What are the factors affecting your decision-making?

It is important to note that to enable the participants to express their views easily, the researcher invited them to choose the language they would like to speak in the interviews. All decided to use Vietnamese. All the interview questions in the semi-structured interviews were translated by the researcher using the translation process which will be presented in section 3.4.6.

3.4.4 Field notes

In addition to interviews, the researcher took field notes to strengthen the data collected. Note-taking of some sort is common to virtually every case study (Yin, 2012). Creswell (2005) stated that field notes are “the data recorded during an observation” (p. 213). Field notes can be taken from different sources of evidence including open-ended interviews, document review, or observations that have been made in a field setting (Yin, 2012). For the current research, the researcher took notes during the interviews and observations. These sources of evidence were used to support the analysis of other data. Two types of field notes were used for the current study: “descriptive field notes and reflective field notes” (Creswell, 2005, p. 214). Descriptive field notes were taken to provide a description of the events, activities, and people involved in the SRI stage of the research. These notes were considered when watching the video recording to see if there were any discrepancies between what the researcher thought she had seen to what video recording revealed. Reflective field notes were also taken after the recorded teaching sessions of researcher’s personal thoughts during the observations and the interviews. Figure 3.3 shows a summary of the data collection methods used in this study.
3.4.5 Recording interviews

The researcher used two digital recorders (one was an Iphone 4 mobile phone and another was a JVJ recorder) simultaneously to record all the interviews (one as a backup for the other). The researcher also tried to avoid background noise by choosing quiet places for interviews. In the end, 20 high sound-quality interviews were recorded.

3.4.6 Data analysis procedure

Before analysing the data, the researcher had to organise and transcribe the data. As a bilingual researcher, the researcher translated the collected data into the target language—English. All the transcribed and translated data are available for viewing upon request. The following section provides a description of these processes.

Transcribing Data

Transcribing data from an oral to a written mode is in itself an initial analysis (Creswell, 2012; Gibbs, 2002; Kvale, 2007; Neuman, 2011). Kvale (2007) suggested that the amount and form of transcribing depends on factors such as the nature of the materials and the purpose of the investigation, the time and money available, the availability of a reliable and patient typist. In the current research, as a PhD student with time and resource constraints, the researcher transcribed her own interviews and observation recordings.
To check the reliability of the data, the researcher had an independent Vietnamese speaking person listen to the interviews and check the transcripts for correspondence between the original oral and the written transcripts. Then, the researcher and the hired person listened to the tape together to arrive at the final transcript.

**Translating Data**

As stated earlier, the interview data were translated from Vietnamese to English. This section presents the procedures adopted specifically for the interview data.

In general, discussion about translation procedures employed in social science research is quite limited (Douglas & Craig, 2007; Liamputtong, 2010). Cross-language qualitative studies are often not accompanied by sufficient explanation of the translation procedure employed to demonstrate the rigour of the research process and the trustworthiness of the research results (Fryer et al., 2012; Larkin, de Casterlé, & Schotsman 2007; Wong & Poon, 2010). Prior to the data collection, validation of the interview questions was conducted (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Silverman, 2010). According to Liamputtong (2010), language differences can be a “potential hurdle” (p.131) in cross-cultural research when English is not the participants’ first language but the research report is written in English. Regarding this issue, the researcher asked the four participants if they wished to be interviewed in English or Vietnamese. All of them preferred to be interviewed in Vietnamese. This was because English is their second language and as Lopez et al. (2008) suggested, researchers should use the participants’ preferred language so that they will have a fuller understanding of the issues under investigation. All interview questions were first translated verbatim into Vietnamese by the researcher who is bilingual in Vietnamese and English. It has been suggested that a bicultural researcher is “[the] most suitable position in doing cross-cultural research in order to overcome linguistic barriers in cross-cultural research” (Liamputtong, 2010, p.137). These researchers have not only the language of the participants but also many social and cultural traits (Liamputtong, 2010, p.138). Therefore, in this case, the researcher who used to be an English lecturer at a university in Vietnam understood the general cultural and social backgrounds of the participants and so was deemed the best person to translate her interview data.

Lopez et al. (2008) suggested that it is imperative to transcribe qualitative interviews verbatim in the participants’ language or source language, and then translate this script into
the target language. Following this suggestion, the researcher transcribed all the interviews in Vietnamese by herself. The transcription process involved listening to the interview tapes several times during which notes were taken about the tones of voice used by participants when describing their experiences, pauses in conversation, and emphasis on certain points which were important to the participants. These notes were taken as future reference points during the process of analysis. On completion of the transcription of participant interviews, the main issue was then deciding the subsequent process: translating the transcription into English for analysis or analysing the data in Vietnamese.

Chen and Boore (2009) strongly recommend that the analysis should begin in the source language. On completion of the analysis, back translation should be applied to translate the results of the study. The value of this procedure is to limit the time and financial constraints and to maintain the rigour of the qualitative study. However, the researcher of the current research did not use this procedure for the following reasons. First, the researcher in this study was a PhD student who needed guidance from her supervising team who were native English speakers. This means they could not have helped her with data analysis if the data had been in Vietnamese. Second, it was complicated to obtain the corresponding words for the term learner autonomy in Vietnamese. The term can be translated differently into Vietnamese and each version reveals the translator’s connotation and perspective, which would have had an influence on the interviewees’ perspectives and understanding. For example, learner autonomy is equivalent to tính chủ động của người học which takes learners’ ability or capacity into account, based on the psychological perspective (Benson, 1997). Learner autonomy can also be translated as sự chủ động của người học – the technical perspective (Benson, 1997). This perspective views learner autonomy as a “situational” where learners are completely responsible for the performance of their learning activities (Chang, 2007; Smith, 2008). Therefore, in order to achieve as close as possible equivalence for the research, the researcher decided to keep this key term in the target language during her interviews.

During the interviews, the participants sometimes used English to express some phrases or terms. Consequently, the transcripts contained a mixture of English and Vietnamese phrases. This led to the decision of translating all the interviews into the target language before using NVIVO - the software to help the data analysis because NVIVO cannot run in two different languages at the same time. In addition, according to Kvale and
Brinkmann (2009), “Interviewing is linguistic interaction, and the product of the interview is a language text. A linguistic analysis addresses the characteristic uses of language in an interview, the use of grammar and linguistic forms” (p. 6). In contrast, analysis of interview transcriptions focusing on meaning addresses the characteristic use of meaning inferred from the language. Therefore, the investigator first translated the interviews fully from Vietnamese into English using the single translation procedure, including some parallel translation (Vietnamese- English and English- Vietnamese) after the initial single translation, and then when analysing the English data.

After the interview transcripts were translated by the researcher from Vietnamese into English, a licensed professional Vietnamese-English translator (Vietnamese) was employed to translate three pieces of the interviews including one initial interview, one stimulated recall interview, and one follow-up in-depth interview into English. The inclusion of a third party lends more pairs of eyes to increase the accuracy of the translation results and reduces the researcher’s subjectivity on the research findings. The next step was to compare these two versions of translated data in terms of conceptual equivalence in order to minimise errors in the translation completed by the researcher (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The comparison was done at the sentence level with the results yielding a 93.01% correspondence. Then, the initial comparisons were expanded to review the rest of the transcripts. Finally, in line with the idea of dynamic equivalence, to gain the final version which most native speakers would understand, an Australian proof-reader was employed to examine all the translated data and provide input and corrections. Thus, with the translation procedure used in this case study, the bias in the research was minimised and its rigour was sustained. Figure 3.4 below is an illustration of the translation method used for this study.
Concerning the rigour of the qualitative research, the study described above was checked against Squires’ (2009) recommendations. There are three main topics in Squires’ recommendations considered in this section: conceptual equivalence, translator’s credentials and translator’s role. Regarding conceptual equivalence criteria, the procedure described above has provided rationales for utilising English as the language for data analysis and explained the validation means employed to ensure trustworthiness and equivalence in the translation. For example, the researcher, also a bilingual, acted as the main translator. To further ensure rigour, she also employed a Vietnamese translator and English native speaker as a proof-reader. They assisted the researcher to ensure the finalised data complied with the
notion of dynamic equivalence, minimised personal bias, and reduced translation errors. All three criteria outlined by Squires were addressed in regard to the translators’ qualifications, their suitability and capacity to undertake this translation. In addition, the researcher has prior experience in translation. As certified translators, the translators involved in this study were trained to distance themselves from the text and produce translations that were as neutral as possible. Moreover, the subsequent involvement of a translator to conduct parallel translation on some of the transcripts and a proof-reader for the whole data was aimed at reducing the researcher’s subjectivity from the single translation procedure she employed and improve the comprehensibility of the data for native English speakers. Overall, the research study aimed at demonstrating the rigour of the translation process and achieving trustworthy cross-language research results.

In relation to the translator role criteria, the researcher has attempted to follow most of Squires’ recommendations. As previously mentioned, the researcher mainly considered the role of independent translators as aides in ensuring that a high quality of translation had been achieved. While the study was limited to one language pairing, Squires’ (2009) suggestion was taken into account. The study utilised the bicultural researcher as the main translator for translating the whole data from Vietnamese into English, a certified Vietnamese translator for translating three interviews among twenty interviews, and a native English-speaker as proof reader in finalising the translated version. Rather than adding complication as postulated by Squires, the involvement of two translators in translating the three interviews was deemed necessary to minimise personal bias in a single translation procedure. By checking the translation procedure’s stages and rationales against Squire’s recommendations, it is shown that this study has strived to be reflexive and transparent.

**Data analysis**

There is a large amount of literature on data analysis or making sense of qualitative data (Creswell, 2012; Gibbs, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 2011) with many different perspectives about this process. For example, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), there are three interlinked processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Gibbs (2002) has chosen to make distinctions between three ways of organising and making sense of qualitative data-description, analysis and interpretation. Recent literature suggests that qualitative researchers should use the processes of coding and categorising
(Creswell, 2012). It is likely that although there exist different terms to refer to the processes of data analysis, they are similar in the techniques to analyse data. For the current research, the processes of coding and categorising are preferred for current popularity, especially when NVIVO was utilised to assist data analysis in the current research. Coding is fundamental in analysing qualitative data when using a constant comparative approach (Creswell, 2012; Gibbs, 2002). Gibbs (2002) defined coding as how the investigator defines what the data is.

**Paper coding and computer coding**

There are two main ways to code the data, either traditionally by hand (paper) or using a computer. This study used both paper and software in the following ways. First, the extended process of transcription and translation in paper mode helped the researcher to become familiar with the data, which was the first step in coding (Creswell, 2012; Kvale, 2007; Gibbs, 2002). From this process, the researcher gained a general understanding of the data, that is, “got a sense of the whole” (Creswell, 2012, p. 244). As part of this process the researcher made some anecdotal notes along the way. The transcribed data were imported into NVIVO 10, to facilitate the coding of the qualitative data. This software is a tool that assists researchers to work with data more efficiently and effectively; it cannot do the analysis itself (Bazeley, 2007).

**What to code?**

Gibbs (2002) mentioned data-driven and concept-driven coding as two ways of coding, or pre-coding (either content- or process-focused) and subsequent coding. Concept-driven coding is a method that builds up a list of thematic ideas based on key words from the literature review, previous studies, or topics in the interviews and then codes the data utilising the list. Data-driven coding is opposite from concept-driven coding. As a constructivist, the researcher of the current study adopted data-driven coding. To enact this coding procedure the researcher started by reading the texts and trying to tease out what was happening in the data. The researcher went through the data again and again in order to gain some sense of the key points. The data was then coded as described in the following sections.

Three stages were used in the data analysis. The researcher analysed all interviews to understand the teachers’ stated beliefs about learner autonomy (that is, to understand what they told the researcher) by identifying key words and phrases used by each case. Creswell (2012) presented steps of coding with three different levels of codes. For the current research,
these steps were used to reach the overarching themes (Figure 3.5). After importing the data from word files into NVIVO, the researcher worked on the data collected from each case study, from the initial interview, next is the data from the SRI, field notes and then the data from follow-up in-depth interviews. Segments of information were then labelled with codes. The research used coding functions in NVIVO (Nodes) to assist with this instead of cutting and pasting manually. Example codes included terms such as scaffolding, developmental process, motivation, English proficiency and so on. To reduce overlap and redundancy of codes, the researcher double-checked by taking the list of codes and going back to the data, circled or highlighted the quotes that support the codes. Finally, the researcher reduced the codes into two overarching themes.

Figure 3.5
A Visual Model of the Coding Process in Qualitative Research

In the next stage of analysis, the researcher analysed data from the classroom observations, taken as the videos for the stimulated recall interviews, to understand teachers’ actual teaching practices regarding learner autonomy. Again, the researcher highlighted the episodes with the important key points in order to fit them into the subcategories. Then, she compared and contrasted observation data and interview data for tabulation. At this stage, the researcher analysed the SRI to understand teachers’ explanations of their underlying reasons for their classroom behaviours. These data were compared and contrasted with data from
Phase 1 of the research, in particular, comparing teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy. In this process the researcher triangulated all the findings to explore the association between teachers’ stated beliefs and enacted beliefs, and factors affecting this relationship. The process of data analysis is shown in Figure 3.6:

Figure 3.6
*Data analysis process*

3.5 ETHICS

Approval from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) was obtained prior to the commencement of the study, with the code number 1200000007. Data collection was conducted in Vietnam at the ten universities selected for their appropriateness to the research design. Approval from each of the facilities to conduct this research was obtained. Full details of the ethics package can be found in the Appendix A.

3.5.1 Informed consent
Prior to seeking informed written consent, the participants were provided with information and consent packages inviting them to participate in the study – the package included information on the purposes of the study, method of information gathering, level of participant involvement, assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, level of risk, and the right of participants to withdraw from the study without prejudice. Prior to participation in the survey, interviews, and observations, participants were asked to sign a written informed consent. An informed consent form in Vietnamese was provided to participants.

3.5.2 Anonymity

Anonymity is the means by which the identity of participants is protected. Prior to implementation of the survey, interviews, and observations participants were asked to select a pseudonym. The only person to have access to the original transcripts was the researcher. Her two supervisors accessed both the original and translated transcripts for guiding the researcher in the analysis process and monitoring the rigour of the analysis.

3.5.3 Confidentiality

Ethical conduct for undertaking research requires that confidentiality of participants be maintained. In keeping with the established standards for ethical research, no information that may lead to the identification of any participant has been included in the final report, or will be included in any publications of the study’s findings.

All teachers who completed the survey who wished to continue in the study were asked to provide personal details so the researcher could approach them for the second stage of the study. However, participants were assured through the consent scripts that their personal information was de-identified for data collection, data analysis and the writing up of the thesis.

In the interviews, the researcher used the pseudonym for each teacher. This helped protect confidentiality. This pseudonym was the code for all data related to the participants. The conversations in which participants were involved were similar to everyday conversation. This helped the participants feel safe and open to participate in the research. The interviews were recorded discreetly so that there was minimal impact on participants. For those students who did not wish to be videorecorded, the researcher pixelated them out if they had been caught on the video.
3.5.4 Storage of information

All information was kept under lock and key for the length of the study. The only persons to have access to the information were the researcher, her two supervisors and the thesis committee. Signed consent forms were kept in a locked filing cabinet at the university during the conduct of the study and will be kept for seven years following completion of the study, after which, they will be destroyed in accordance with QUT requirements for destructions of confidential information.

3.5.5 Level of risk

This study was considered to pose minimal risks to the participants. The survey, the interviews and video observations were taken in Vietnam. All the interviews took place at the participant’s university at a time that was mutually convenient to the researcher and participant. The focus of the interviews was on the teaching strategies used in each of the lessons in relation to learner autonomy.

As the video recordings of lessons were conducted during class time, students in the selected classes for this study were also included as part of ethics approval, although they were not the focus on the research. Students who did not wish to be recorded were asked to sit near the back of the room. The video cameras were situated at the side of the room, near the back. In most incidents, only the back of students’ heads was recorded. For those students who did not wish to be videorecorded, the researcher pixelated them out if they are caught on the video.

Confidentiality of participants was ensured through the de-identification of data. Audio-tapes and video recording were destroyed upon being transcribed. The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. The researcher also made provision for the possibility that participants might experience some level of discomfort while participating in the research (e.g. having their teaching videotaped). These risks were openly discussed with interested participants before the written informed consent forms were signed. The potential risks associated with the proposed study were easily managed with the measures described above.
3.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented and discussed the research design, rationale for choice of participants, methods, data collection procedure and the data analysis process employed in the current study of Vietnamese university EFL teachers’ beliefs about learner. Figure 3.7 illustrates a summary of the research data collection for the current research. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research.

Figure 3.7
Summary of the research data collection
Chapter 4: Results and Findings

This chapter reports on the results of the research and includes two sections. The first section reports on the results and findings from Phase 1 of the study. The data analysed in the first section (Section 4.1) were collected through a survey with 184 EFL teachers in ten universities in Hanoi, Vietnam in February 2012. The purpose of using a survey was to gain an overview of Vietnamese EFL teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy, to help the researcher identify the participants for the second stage of the study and to help inform Phase 2 of the study. The results from Phase 2 of the research are then presented in the second section of the chapter (section 4.2). Data in this phase of the research were collected using one-on-one interviews, field notes, stimulated-recall interviews (SRI), and observations with four selected Vietnamese lecturers in four different universities. These four teachers had completed the survey in the first phase of the study and were willing to participate in the second phase of this study.

4.1 RESULTS AND FINDINGS FROM PHASE 1 OF THE RESEARCH

This section addresses the first of the three research questions guiding the study: What are teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy? Data were collected by means of the researcher-developed survey, Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB), which consists of one opening survey item and four sections: (1) Sense of Responsibility, (2) Beliefs about Students, (3) Constraints to Autonomy and (4) Fostering Autonomy. The LALL:TB was completed by 188 teachers from ten universities located in Hanoi. As described in the previous chapter, incomplete data from four teachers were deleted from the data set and the responses of the remaining 184 teachers were analysed by means of descriptive analyses using SPSS (Version 21). The goal of the analysis was to develop an understanding of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy.

4.1.1 Results from LALL:TB – Sense of responsibility

In the first section of the survey, teachers were asked to consider their responsibility in relation to developing learner autonomy in their class. Results indicated that most of the
teachers regarded themselves as bearing the major responsibility for all aspects of the teaching-learning process in their class. Teachers’ responses across the five items in this subscale indicated that more than 85% of the teachers agreed (60.1% A & 25.3% SA) that they were responsible for developing learner autonomy in their class. For example, approximately 90% of teachers agreed (58.7% A & 31.5% SA) that they were responsible for determining the objectives of each lesson in their classroom. Approximately, 74% (61.4% A & 12.5% SA) believed that it was their responsibility for choosing the learning content, 84% (63.3% A & 20.1% SA) believed that they, not their students were responsible for evaluating student progress, 93% (57.6% A & 35.3% SA) believed that they were responsible for choosing the teaching methods and techniques for learning and 87% (59.3% A & 27.2% SA) indicated that they believed they were responsible for monitoring the learning process in each lesson.

Table 4.1

 Teachers’ Beliefs about Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am responsible for determining the objectives for each lesson in my classroom.</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am responsible for choosing the learning content for each lesson.</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am responsible for evaluating my students’ learning progress in each lesson.</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I am responsible for selecting the methods and techniques to be used in each lesson.</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I am responsible for monitoring the learning process in each lesson.</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Beliefs about Responsibility</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.7% negative</td>
<td>85.4% positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=184  (SD: Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree, U: Undecided, A: Agree, SA: Strongly Agree)

From these results, it would appear that teachers believed that they were responsible for student learning. This finding led to a question of why teachers believed that they and not their students were responsible for student learning. Not agreeing may appear to suggest teachers’ irresponsibility rather than the possibility of giving learners some responsibility for
their own learning. Further research in relation to students’ responsibility would shed further light. The following section sheds some light on the question.

4.1.2 Results from LALL:TB – Beliefs about students

Teachers’ beliefs regarding their students’ ability to be autonomous learners were examined in the second section of the survey. Table 4.2 presents teachers’ beliefs regarding their students’ ability to take the responsibility for aspects of their learning. The teachers’ responses across the four items in this subscale indicated that less than 40% of the teachers agreed (35.6% A & 3.9% SA) that they believed their students had the ability to be autonomous learners, in other words, teachers held negative beliefs about their students’ ability to be autonomous learners. For example, only 36% of teachers agreed (31.0% A & 4.9% SA) that their students were able to decide the objectives for each lesson while only 33% agreed (29.9% A & 2.7% SA) that their students were able to choose their learning materials for lessons. Similarly, only 35% agreed (33.7% A & 1.6% SA) that their students were able to choose their learning activities. In contrast, a much larger percentage of teachers - approximately 54% - agreed (47.8% A & 6.5% SA) that their students were able to evaluate their study outcomes from lessons.

Of concern across these items, however, is the high number of teachers who were ‘undecided’ or ‘not sure’ in their evaluations of students’ abilities; for example: 17% were undecided (U) about their students’ ability to decide the objectives for each lesson; 15% of them indicated that were uncertain (U) about their students’ ability to choose learning materials for each lesson; and approximately 25% were not sure (U) about their students’ ability to evaluate the study outcomes of each lesson. These results suggest that teachers do not hold strongly positive beliefs about the abilities of their students to be autonomous learners. As a result of their beliefs, teachers may well be unwilling to utilise approaches to teaching and learning that would encourage their students to take greater responsibility for their learning (i.e., to be more autonomous learners).

It is important to acknowledge the limitation of the questions that all the items ask about the students’ ability rather than their potential. It would be possible for a teacher to answer “Strongly Disagree” to all the items and yet believe that their students are capable of developing these abilities.
### Teachers’ Beliefs about Students’ Ability to be Autonomous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. My students are able to decide the objectives for each lesson.</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My students are able to choose their learning materials for each lesson.</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My students are able to choose their learning activities for each lesson.</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My students are able to evaluate the study outcomes of each lesson.</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Overall Beliefs about Students’ Autonomy | 4.7% | 36.6% | 19.2% | 35.6% | 3.9% |
|                                         | 41.3% negative | 39.5% positive |

N=184  (SD: Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree, U: Undecided, A: Agree, SA: Strongly Agree)

#### 4.1.3 Results from LALL:TB – Constraints to autonomy

Teachers’ beliefs about constraints to fostering learner autonomy in their teaching contexts were examined in the third subscale of the survey. The teachers’ responses indicated that more than 54% of teachers were in agreement (45.0% A & 8.8% SA) that the six items posed constraints to fostering their students’ autonomy. In contrast, 20% of teachers were undecided and 26% disagreed (24.0% D & 2.0% SD) that the listed items posed constraints.

An examination of each of teachers’ responses across the six items indicates some variability. To illustrate, approximately 72% of teachers agreed (58.7% A & 13.0% SA) that autonomy is only achieved by certain learners, which may indicate teachers’ lack of understanding of the construct of learner autonomy. This will be explored and discussed further in Phase 2 of the research. This result is generally consistent with the overall result on the previous subscale; namely that more than 60% of teachers either disagreed or were undecided about students’ abilities to be autonomous (4.7% SD, 36.6% D and 19.2% U).

Teachers’ responses across the remaining five items of the subscale fell within a range of 44% to 57% agreement with the statements. Specifically, approximately 55% of teachers agreed (48.4% A & 6.5% SA) that the low level of ICT application hindered the development of learner autonomy; approximately 44% (36.4% A & 7.6% SA) believed that examinations...
were a barrier to fostering learner autonomy; 48% (38.0% A & 10.3% SA) thought that governmental educational policy was the main constraint to fostering learner autonomy; 47% (37.5% A & 9.2% SA) indicated that they believed their teaching was restricted by the syllabus; and 57% agreed (51.1% A & 6.0% SA) that their knowledge about learner autonomy hindered them in developing learner autonomy. Table 4.3 summarises the teachers’ responses to the questions about the causes that hindered learner autonomy in their teaching contexts.

Table 4.3
Teachers’ Beliefs about Constraints to Fostering Learner Autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Learner autonomy is only achieved by certain learners.</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Low level of technology application hinders fostering learner autonomy.</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Examinations are barriers to the development of learner autonomy in my class.</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Governmental educational policy is the main constraint to fostering learner autonomy in my class</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The syllabus is supposed to determine everything that a teacher does in the class.</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The teachers’ knowledge about learner autonomy is a main constraint to fostering learner autonomy in my class.</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Beliefs about Constraints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2.0%</th>
<th>24.0%</th>
<th>20.2%</th>
<th>45.0%</th>
<th>8.8%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

N=184 (SD: Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree, U: Undecided, A: Agree, SA: Strongly Agree)

4.1.4 Results from LALL:TB – Fostering autonomy

Results across the 3 subscales presented thus far suggest that many respondents hold somewhat conflicted views of learner autonomy; to explain, more than 85% of teachers believed that they rather than the students are responsible for designing and evaluating
students’ learning (Sense of Responsibility). A high proportion of teachers, more than 60%, also held negative or undecided views in relation to their beliefs about students’ ability to be autonomous learners (Beliefs about Students). Similarly, a high proportion of teachers (more than 53%) indicated that there are significant constraints to fostering learner autonomy (Constraints to Autonomy). Of particular interest in this third subscale of the survey are the results that a high proportion of teachers (72%) indicated that they believed learner autonomy is only achieved by certain learners and that their own knowledge about learner autonomy (56% positive and more than 27% undecided) is a barrier to fostering learner autonomy.

On the foundation of these results, which suggest a degree of conflict among teachers’ understanding of what is required (development of more autonomous learners), what they believe about their role as teachers (taking primary responsibility for teaching and learning) and what they believe about students’ abilities (to become autonomous learners), it is important to note that high proportions of teachers hold positive beliefs about approaches to fostering learner autonomy. As shown in Table 4.4, teachers’ overall beliefs about the six listed approaches are compelling with more than 86% of teachers choosing positive responses (62.6% A & 23.6% SA). Less than 10% of teachers were undecided and less than 5% negative (3.7% D & 0.8% SD) in their overall responses on the subscale.

With regard to the first item, that providing students with learning materials and resources would foster learner autonomy, 86% of teachers indicated agreement (66.8% A & 19.0% SA). Similarly, about 82% of teachers agreed (70.7% SA & 11.4% SA) that applying ICT into language learning helped to foster learner autonomy; about 90% (57.6% A & 32.6% SA) agreed that training students to develop their skills and strategies would help students to become autonomous; approximately 78% (60.3% A & 17.9% SA) indicated that there must be curriculum reform to enhance learner autonomy; approximately 89% (56.0% A & 33.2% SA) agreed that cooperative learning with other students and teachers would assist in developing learner autonomy; and finally, 91% (64.1% A & 27.2% SA) indicated that they agreed that additional training of teachers would facilitate the development of greater learner autonomy.
### Table 4.4

**Teachers’ Beliefs about Approaches to Fostering Learner Autonomy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Providing students with learning materials and resources.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Applying ICT into language learning.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Training students to develop their skills and strategies to become autonomous.</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Curriculum reform.</th>
<th>1.1%</th>
<th>2.7%</th>
<th>17.9%</th>
<th>60.3%</th>
<th>17.9%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Cooperative learning with other students and teachers.</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Training teachers.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Overall Beliefs about Approaches</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 184 (SD: Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree, U: Undecided, A: Agree, SA: Strongly Agree)

### 4.1.5 Results from LALL:TB – Teachers’ overall beliefs

Teachers’ overall beliefs about learner autonomy in language learning are presented separately in relation to the four subscales of the Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB) survey because an additive overall score would not be meaningful. To explain, in a context where high learner autonomy was sought, one could expect both highly positive (agreement) and highly negative (disagreement) results across the subscales (e.g., positive beliefs about students’ abilities and negative beliefs about teachers’ responsibility). The results of the subscales are presented numerically in Table 4.5 and graphically in Figure 4.1.
Table 4.5
Teachers’ Overall Beliefs about Learner Autonomy in Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LALL:TB Subscales</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sense of Responsibility</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.7% negative</td>
<td>84.5% positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Beliefs about Students</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41.3% negative</td>
<td>39.5% positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Constraints to Autonomy</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26.0% negative</td>
<td>53.8% positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fostering Autonomy</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.5% negative</td>
<td>86.2% positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in both Table 4.5 and Figure 4.1, a high proportion of teachers (84.5%) overall believe that they have the responsibility for designing and evaluating students’ learning (Sense of Responsibility). In a context where learner autonomy is being espoused, however, one would expect to see teachers relinquishing some control and encouraging their students to take greater responsibility for designing and evaluating their learning.

With regard to beliefs about students’ abilities to become autonomous learners (Beliefs about Students), the results suggest that a majority of teachers hold either negative (41.3%) or undecided (19.2%) views about their students’ abilities. Again, in a context seeking to develop greater student autonomy, one would expect to see a greater proportion of teachers holding positive beliefs about the capabilities of their students.

In relation to teachers’ perceptions of constraints to students developing greater autonomy for their learning, the results (Constraints to Autonomy) indicate that teachers are generally in agreement (53.8% positive) or undecided (20.2%) about the specific constraints listed in the survey. In a context seeking to engender greater learner autonomy, these results will be of interest to those seeking to facilitate the development of learner autonomy. Again, this finding will be discussed in relation to Phase Two results in the present chapter as well as in the following discussion chapter, Chapter Five.

Finally, the teachers’ responses on the fourth subscale indicate that teachers are very much in agreement (86.2% positive) that specific actions can foster autonomous learning in
their contexts. This finding suggests that although teachers may be somewhat conflicted in their understanding and beliefs about learner autonomy, they are in strong agreement that specific approaches and strategies might well foster greater autonomy among language learners.

Figure 4.1
*Teachers’ overall beliefs about learner autonomy*

Given that it was more meaningful to examine teachers’ responses across the four subscales of the *Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB)* separately rather than as an overall total score for the scale, it was decided that possible correlations among the four subscales should be explored. Table 4.6 displays the correlations among the subscales. Significant positive correlations between *Fostering Autonomy* and *Teachers Responsibility* as well as between *Fostering Autonomy* and *Constraints to Autonomy* confirm the posited conflicted beliefs of the teachers about their requirement to facilitate the development of more autonomous language learners. That is, the teachers want to foster more autonomous learners but they still feel responsible for managing their students’ learning. They are also aware that there are constraints to autonomous learning posed by their teaching contexts.
Table 4.6

Correlations among Subscales: Teachers’ Responsibility, Students’ Ability to be Autonomous, Constraints to Autonomy and Fostering Autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teachers’ Responsibility</th>
<th>Students’ Ability to be Autonomous</th>
<th>Constraints to Autonomy</th>
<th>Fostering Autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Responsibility</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ Ability to be Autonomous</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraints to Autonomy</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering Autonomy</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < .05 ** p < 0.01

Next, another post hoc analysis was conducted in relation to answering the first research question guiding the study: *What are teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy?* It was decided to examine whether there were significant differences between teachers who held highly positive perceptions of students’ ability to be autonomous and teachers who held highly negative perceptions. Data were teachers’ responses on the second subscale (*Beliefs about Students*) of the survey, *Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Teachers’ Beliefs (LALL:TB)*.

The ‘highly positive’ group included the 45 participants (24.5% of the sample) with the highest scores on *the Beliefs about Students* subscale, which was comprised of items 15-20 on the LALL:TB. The ‘highly negative’ group included the 45 participants (24.5% of the sample) with the lowest scores on *the Beliefs about Students* subscale. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the two groups across a range of characteristics and variables including years of teaching experience and overall scores on the fours subscales of the LALL:TB: Sense of Responsibility, Beliefs about Students, Constraints to Autonomy, and Fostering Autonomy. The ANOVA indicated that the two groups were not significantly different with respect to years of experiences or to results on the other 3 subscales of the survey (Table 4.6). On the basis of the available data, the only significant
difference between the two groups was in relation to the teachers’ beliefs about the ability of their students to become more autonomous (Beliefs about Students).

Table 4.7
Comparison of the Teachers Responding with High and Low Perceptions of Students’ Ability to be Autonomous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics &amp; Variables</th>
<th>High Perceptions Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Low Perceptions Mean (SD)</th>
<th>ANOVA $F_{(1,18)}$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Experience</td>
<td>6.71 (4.68)</td>
<td>6.63 (4.24)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Responsibility</td>
<td>20.29 (2.49)</td>
<td>20.40 (2.93)</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about Students</td>
<td>15.76 (1.09)</td>
<td>8.10 (1.12)</td>
<td>1082.61</td>
<td>.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraints to Autonomy</td>
<td>20.22 (3.47)</td>
<td>19.46 (3.43)</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering Autonomy</td>
<td>24.98 (2.62)</td>
<td>24.29 (2.86)</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Additional post hoc analyses of variance (ANOVA) with Bonferroni adjustment for post hoc comparisons were then conducted to ascertain whether there were differences between groups of teachers in relation to their overall scores on each of the four subscales of the LALL:TB. Results indicated that there were no significant differences between female and male teachers, among the experience groups (1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years & 16-25 years) and among the different university groups with regard to scores on the four LALL:TB subscales.

Finally, it should be noted that additional insight into teachers’ views about learner autonomy emerged from the survey opening items which invited teachers to elaborate what learner autonomy meant to them. Five different terms including misconceptions about learner autonomy were presented for teachers to select. Table 4.7 reports teachers’ understanding or conceptions of the nature of learner autonomy. In general, the data indicated that teachers held wide ranges of the interpretations of learner autonomy. For example, approximately 16% defined learner autonomy as a capacity that teachers can help learners to develop in the learning process, approximately 19% believed learner autonomy is synonymous with the
situation in which learners are totally responsible for their learning, while 19% agreed that learner autonomy is learner’s right to take control of their own learning. Also, what was noticeable was that there were a large number of the surveyed EFL teachers in this who study hold misconceptions about learner autonomy. Approximately 27% defined it as self-study or self-instruction which means learning without a teacher, 11% defined learner autonomy as a teaching methodology that focuses on learners. 13% defined learner autonomy by combining all the options that they were offered in the survey. For example, learner autonomy is defined as self-study and a capacity that teachers can help learners to develop in the learning process. In total, nearly 47% of the surveyed teachers hold misconceptions about the term.

Table 4.8
Definitions of the term ‘Learner autonomy’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner autonomy is defined as ...</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A capacity that teachers can help learners to develop in the learning process</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The situation in which learners are totally responsible for their learning.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner’s right to take control of their own learning.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The same as self-study (self-instruction)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methodology that focuses on learners.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting that there is a difference between the two groups (mentioned above) in terms of definitions of learner autonomy. Table 4.8 summarises the comparison of the additional characteristics of responding with high and low perceptions of their students’ ability to be autonomous. There were more respondents of the low group who thought of learner autonomy as self-study than the high group. However, there were more participants of the high group who believed learner autonomy as capacity than those in the low group.

Taken together, these results provide information to suggest that the teachers’ understanding of learner autonomy as well as the role of teachers in fostering autonomous learners is somewhat conflicted, indicating that additional in-service professional development may well be needed.
Table 4.9
Comparison of the additional Characteristics of Responding with High and Low Perceptions of their Students’ Ability to be Autonomous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>High Perceptions (n = 45)</th>
<th>Low Perceptions (n = 45)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-5yrs</td>
<td>1-5yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10yrs</td>
<td>6-10yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15yrs</td>
<td>11-15yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16-25yrs</td>
<td>16-25yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>situation</td>
<td>situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>right</td>
<td>right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-study</td>
<td>self-study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>methodology</td>
<td>methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>others</td>
<td>others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.6 Summary of Phase 1

This section summarises the salient findings to emerge from Phase 1 of the study. In relation to teachers’ sense of responsibility, the data indicated that the teachers believed that they were responsible for teaching-learning process. With regard to beliefs about students’ abilities to become autonomous learners, the results suggest that teachers do not hold strongly positive beliefs about the current abilities of their students to be autonomous learners. In the context of fostering learner autonomy, it would be expected that there should be less control taken by the teacher and the need for a greater proportion of teachers to hold positive beliefs about their students’ abilities. As reported above about teachers’ beliefs about the constraint to students developing greater autonomy for their own learning, the data indicate variability, with more teachers positively believing that there were constraints hindering learner autonomy in their contexts. The data in this phase also indicate that teachers are very much in agreement that specific actions can foster autonomous learning in their contexts. Another result indicated that there were no significant difference between female and male teachers, among the experienced and less experienced groups and among the different university
groups. Finally, it is important to note that teachers held a wide range of interpretations about learner autonomy. Many teachers hold somewhat conflicted views of learner autonomy. The data reported in section 4.1 give a valuable overview of the teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy.

4.2 RESULTS AND FINDINGS FROM PHASE 2 OF THE RESEARCH

Introduction

This section reports on the results from the second phase of the research which aims to explore teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in depth. Data gathered from an initial and final interview, three observed lessons, field note data, and three stimulated recall interviews (SRI) with each of the four participants in this phase of the research were analysed using a constant comparative process.

The following sections reporting data and results on each case begin with the participant’s demographical information. The first research question What are Vietnamese EFL teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy? is addressed by describing how the teachers understood the term learner autonomy by exploring four aspects of learner autonomy, including the interpretation of the nature of learner autonomy, characteristics of autonomous learners, teachers and students roles in autonomous classroom, and the constraints and approaches to foster learner autonomy.

An analysis of teachers’ actual teaching practice evidences by exploring teachers’ roles in all aspects of the teaching and learning process were reported in response to the second research question: What are the teachers’ actual teaching practices regarding learner autonomy? This section starts with the description of the observed class including the classroom physical arrangement and the students.

Finally, tensions and dilemmas are discussed in response to the third research question What is the association between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and teachers’ actual teaching practice? As argued earlier in this thesis, within a social constructivist view of learning, learner autonomy is seen as an attribute of the learner, a characteristic that learner possesses. The teacher is positioned as a facilitator in the teaching and learning process who negotiates and facilitates the teaching-learning process to enable the students to be responsible for their own learning, and learning and knowledge is constructed through this process.
The significant emergent themes of the teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy expressed in Phase 2 of the research are reported in the following sections. The chapter presents the findings from each participant as a separate case before triangulation of the results to explore the associations between teachers’ stated beliefs and their teaching practices.

4.2.1 Participant 1 - Thu

Thu (a pseudonym), was born in 1980. She began her professional career as a lecturer of English six years ago at a university in Hanoi, Vietnam. Thu has completed her master course in TESOL at University H where she has been working as a full-time lecturer of English. Her university often organises professional development workshops for its staff. Earlier in the year, Thu had a training workshop on methodology related to goal setting with a section of that workshop related to learner autonomy.

**Thu’s beliefs about learner autonomy**

*Learner autonomy as learner’s attribute*

In the initial interview, Thu was asked what her beliefs about learner autonomy were. She described learner autonomy as the “ability” to monitor one’s learning as central to learner autonomy which also includes a student’s “responsibility to learn” independently of the teacher. In the final interview, she changed the word “ability” to “capacity” when defining learner autonomy, she said: “Learner autonomy is the capacity and the willingness of the students in their self-study and [being] responsible for their learning.” She viewed learner autonomy as an attribute that learners have where students can learn on their own without the support from the teacher.

Thu characterised autonomous learners as motivated learners, elaborating that: “I can recognize autonomous students easily. They are willing to study and have interest in their learning in the classroom. Thus, they learn well”. According to Thu, learners’ active and independent involvement in their learning (autonomy) increased motivation to learn and consequently increased learning effectiveness.

When asked about the extent to which she felt her current students were autonomous, Thu commented that her current students did not have any degree of autonomy because,
being first year students, they were uninterested and unmotivated in the learning process in the class. She said: “...I have the feeling that in their first year, they are not interested in learning...they just do what I assign them to do. They never think of anything else to write.” Thu suggested that in order to become motivated, the learners needed to achieve an appropriate level of knowledge and experience. She also indicated that after one or two more semesters when her students were at higher level of learning and experience of learning, they could be autonomous, as these extracts from the initial interview showed: “when they learn the second and then the third semester, they will have enough knowledge and experience of learning; they will be more motivated, so they will be more autonomous in their learning.” This comment revealed Thu’s belief that the more proficient at learning English the students were, the more autonomous they became. She viewed autonomy as associated with a higher level of proficiency, that is, there was a connection between learner autonomy and English language proficiency.

While Thu indicated in the initial interview that she believed that learner autonomy could not be fostered with her current students because of their low level of proficiency, Thu indicated in her final interview that learner autonomy in her teaching could be fostered thanks to the availability of learning resources such as online learning as well as when students are open to accepting new things and new ways to learn. Thus, Thu indicated that students could learn independently without a teacher’s support and suggested that this may be one reason to explain why many students did not attend her class, because they had become autonomous enough to not need the teacher’s support. She said:

I think it is possible [for them to become autonomous]. Students now are more open. They have different sources of information and learning. They are more autonomous than the previous generation. I think the reason why more and more students don’t want to go to class to attend the lesson is partly because of this.

(Initial interview, Thu)

While Thu described that students were not initially motivated to be autonomous in learning English she expressed that she promoted learner autonomy in her work by creating “the conditions and environment for the students to learn on their own and control their learning”. She described the range of scaffolding activities and teaching strategies she used such as pair and group work, class discussions, with more time for questions/answers and less time for formal lecturing. Thu suggested that structures such as tutorials and projects as well
as class discussions “could help enhance autonomous learning”. She expressed that the students should “work together so they are more responsible for their own learning and they can express their ideas and voices” and the lesson “will be more interesting” for them. This belief came from her experience of working at H University as she pointed out “At this university, I find the learning situations interesting and useful for the students because the students here have to do a lot of projects in their study.” She believed that through these activities, students’ motivation and their interest for learning would be improved; therefore, learner autonomy could be fostered.

In an attempt to raise the present quality of teaching and learning, a few years ago, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training officially institutionalised a new policy: QD43-2007-BGD, which states that “Một tín chỉ được quy định bằng 15 tiết học lý thuyết; …Đối với những học phần lý thuyết hoặc thực hành, thí nghiệm, để tiếp thu được một tín chỉ sinh viên phải dành ít nhất 30 giờ chuẩn bị cá nhân.” (One credit point is equivalent to 15 class hours. In order to learn well, students must spend at least 30 hours of preparation for an equivalent credit point) (Moet, 2007, p. 3). The policy describes that teachers need to engage students in higher order thinking, incorporate high in-class participation and problem-solving and to foster learner autonomy. However, the new policy provides neither an explanation of what technical terms such as learner autonomy mean nor the guidance on how to implement this kind of pedagogy in the classroom. Thu mentioned that at her faculty, teachers are advised to foster learner autonomy; an extract from her initial interview shows this:

At this university, I find the learning situations interesting and useful for the students because the students here have to do a lot of projects in their study. Right at the beginning of the term, the head teacher of the subject confirmed that the students here had to prepare their lessons in advance. Teachers are responsible for assigning the students questions for them to think and prepare. In the class, teachers must focus more on class discussion. We are reminded about this right at the first meeting at the beginning of each semester. The faculty presents this requirement and instruction on the first page of the syllabus. This is one of the requirements of the faculty.

(Initial interview, Thu)

The new ministerial policy has been operationalised in the faculty’s syllabus which advises that in the course, teachers can train and support the students by providing additional
opportunities for practicing language with tasks aimed at developing confidence and motivation and autonomy. According to Thu, her faculty required and supported teachers to foster learner autonomy using specific guidelines to encourage students to engage in learning. For example, the teacher was responsible for assigning students homework to prepare for class lessons whereas class time should be devoted to class discussions and problem solving. It is noteworthy that Thu had been given practical advice on how to help her students to become more autonomous by the Head teacher in her faculty but yet she ignored them. In addition, she mentioned that “In fact, [when] my students are at a quite high level of English competence, I want them to utilise their time at home more”. She suggested that her students at a high level of English proficiency should be responsible for more learning at home in preparation for consolidating their learning in class.

Regarding the challenges she felt she faced in seeking to foster learner autonomy in her teaching, Thu identified she “had no knowledge or understanding about learner autonomy” because of her prior background. She stated that “I didn’t learn about learner autonomy. When I did my Master course, learner autonomy was just mentioned slightly in the methodology subject.” She pointed out that even at her current university, the teachers were required to utilise some forms of scaffolding such as using assignments or projects to assess students, but “but we don’t know that we need to do it to foster learner autonomy”. Thu suggested that, “it is important to have training courses to let the teachers understand why or the real reason they do this or that and how to do it better.” She emphasised that: “Sometimes, we understand something like this [learner autonomy], but how to apply or practice it is another issue”. She added that:

If the teachers have strong beliefs in learner autonomy, they are able to achieve it. There are some teachers who may know about learner autonomy but they don’t have the beliefs or not have very strong beliefs, they can only achieve it at very low level. Also, it depends on teachers because each teacher had different abilities to do it.

(Final interview, Thu)

Thu suggested the best solution for her current situation would be “teacher training”. In addition, she strongly believed that it would be also useful to conduct training about learner autonomy for related educators including policy maker or syllabus designer because:

In Vietnamese educational context, teachers are also syllabus designers. Teachers must follow strictly the syllabus. I think it will be good if the syllabus designers have
an idea of learner autonomy or be open-minded about it. It is important. Teachers will have more “chances” to foster learner autonomy.

(Final interview, Thu)

This comment revealed that Thu felt that institutional factors (e.g. syllabus) hindered the extent to which she could promote learner autonomy. In summary, although, Thu felt that the lack of teacher’ beliefs and/or understanding about learner autonomy was the main reason it did not occur more, she also identified other problems such as learners’ attitudes and motivation, and the syllabus as the factors that hindered learner autonomy in her current teaching context.

The above data indicated that Thu had some awareness about learner autonomy. She expressed the belief that she was responsible for her students’ learning and held strong beliefs that in order to increase learner autonomy, teachers needed to have training. These finding concur with those expressed by participants in Phase 1 of the research where approximately 87% of respondents believed that teachers were responsible for student learning and approximately 91% indicated that additional teacher training would help teachers foster learner autonomy in their classrooms. Thu also believed that students needed training to develop learner autonomy. This view supports the Phase 1 data where about 90% of respondents indicated that training students to develop their skills and strategies would help them become autonomous. Thu also viewed learner autonomy as a gradual process in which both teacher and learners were involved, but both of them needed training.

**Thu’s teaching practices regarding learner autonomy**

The above section describes Thu’s beliefs about learner autonomy. In response to research questions 2 and 3, this section presents data that examine how Thu’s beliefs were translated into her classroom practices and the reasons underlying these practices in relation to fostering learner autonomy.

**The observed class**

Thu invited the researcher to observe one of her six classes this semester. There were 30 students in the class. These students had to study a foundation course in English and obtain an IELTS score of 6.0 in order to be eligible for enrolment in their chosen undergraduate course. Instead of having a text book or course book, Thu was given a flexible
syllabus to design the content and activities for her class. She had 10 sessions (90 minutes long each) to teach students writing skills over the semester. The physical arrangement of the classroom was in a traditional arrangement for Vietnam as described in the following observational notes:

Desks were in eight rows in two blocks facing the front of the classroom where the teacher typically stood or sat. This classroom was very big with 70 desks and movable chairs which were arranged in eight rows in two blocks facing the blackboard and teacher’s desk. There was no projector or any posters located in the room and only 20 students attended the class.

(Field notes, OL1, Thu, April)

Institution-focused classroom

Overall, the field note data showed that Thu appeared to be teacher-centred where she took control of managing the various aspects of the teaching-learning process in all three observed lessons including deciding what to learn, how to learn, when and with what resources to learn, and reflecting on and evaluating what has been learned. It is noteworthy that the three observed lessons had similar patterns. In the three observed lessons, Thu followed exactly the same teaching procedures although each lesson dealt with a different topic in the IELTS writing task from the syllabus.

At the beginning of each observed lesson, after greeting the students, Thu immediately introduced the topic of the lesson. She told the students the content for the lesson and she wrote on the board the title of the lesson. In the three observed lessons the students did not ask any questions. They did not discuss the topic or content of the lesson nor did they suggest or contribute any ideas in relation to changing anything in relation to the lessons. Some of them took notes when the teacher wrote on the board, others listened. The content and objectives of each lesson were pre-decided by the teacher. When asked for the reason why she organised her lessons in this manner and whether she believed that she should involve students more in deciding the lesson objectives, Thu explained that she had told her students the syllabus at the beginning of the course, therefore, she assumed that students were able to remember the content of the course so there was nothing left to discuss on the matter. In a SRI, she said:
I had told them that they were going to learn all kinds of writing tasks in this semester. So they all know that each session will deal with one type of writing task. If they are good, I need only one session to lecture on one type, if they don’t understand much, I am going to give them two sessions. For example, I just needed one session to teach them how to write Columns and a Bar chart.

(SRI 2, Thu)

However, Thu mentioned that for the current semester, she was given the responsibility to design the course for her students. From her explanation it appeared that Thu was responsible for the course without any pressure of a fixed syllabus or program. However, she did not request any input from students about the content of the syllabus nor the process for learning, before or during the lessons. The one observed lesson was quick paced with little time for students to reflect on what they were learning or how they were learning or, indeed, to take any control of their learning. The following extract illustrates the approach to teaching and learning taken by Thu in her classroom, which demonstrates a teacher-centred approach:

After defining the content of the lesson, she provided students with three handout worksheets then lectured on the content of the lesson. The students used the first handout to answer the teacher’s questions. Thu read the question on the handout and called particular students to answer. She asked the students to move to the next task on the second handout and walked around the class while they began the second worksheet. The teacher came back to her desk and sat down and waited for the students to complete their exercise. Then, she called on students in turn to answer questions provided. She gave them immediate feedback for each answer, saying: “Correct” or “Good”. Then, she asked the students to take out the third handout. This handout was the previous year’s test. She asked them to spend 10 minutes to do the task. Then, she let them have a break.

(Field notes, OL1, Thu, April)

In the second and the third observed lessons, the teacher followed a similar teaching procedure. In addition to deciding the objectives and procedures for lessons Thu was responsible for the materials in her class. She determined the agenda and content for each lesson and prepared all the handouts for the activities and exercises. For example, in the first lesson, the students were given two handouts with five exercises; in the second observed lesson, they were give two handouts; and in the last observed lesson, they were given two
handouts. After introducing the topic of the lesson, Thu delivered the handouts to students. She then lectured for the first half of the lesson time. The lesson continued in the order of the exercises on the handouts. The teacher asked the students to complete exercise as per her instructions. For each activity, the students were required to do one exercise without being given any other choice. In explaining her behaviour Thu suggested that she had never thought about giving students any responsibilities for their learning so provided no opportunities for fostering learner autonomy in her class. In a SRI, she said that:

Honestly, I am responsible for all the activities in my class. I have never thought about what you have just told me (letting students be responsible for their learning). I just thought that after finishing the theory on Pie charts, I needed to give them exercises to practice.

(SRI, Thu)

When asked for the reason why she chose all the tasks and exercises for the students to do in the class, Thu said that it came from her teaching experience to help her students to have better score at the exams, clarifying that “I have been teaching for years, I know what is good and what is bad for my students. I have to arrange the activities to be suitable with the time frame for each lesson”. This observation suggested that Thu taught in a habitual way with a clear focus on exam preparation. Viewing her own teaching practice as recorded on the video, Thu admitted that she did not create any opportunities for her students to be responsible for their learning. Thu had not considered including opportunities for students to develop learner autonomy. A main reason for not sharing the responsibility of developing learner autonomy with her students was because of the pressure of the examinations on her teaching time and practices. This is evidenced by what she said in the final interview:

Everything is test-oriented. All lessons must be very practical, understandable. In addition, the lessons must be more difficult than the real test. But there must be enough for the students to learn, but not too much because they have so many other things to learn. So, I have to give them enough proper tasks, not to let them to learn and construct themselves.

(Final interview, Thu)

From the above statement it can be seen that developing students’ learner autonomy was not the priority in Thu’s teaching. In fact, when observing this teacher, the researcher noticed that she decided all the things related to the teaching process, including deciding the methods and
the techniques to teach. There was no collaboration on processes between her and the students as to content or procedures to support learner autonomy. In the three observed classes Thu stood in front of the class, near the board to lecture and wrote all linguistic input on the board from which she expected the students to take notes. She raised questions and expected students to answer the questions but rarely received any answers from the students so she gave the answers herself and continued teaching. As was observed in all three lessons, the students took notes during some parts of the teacher’s lecture, however, they did not write down everything that the teacher presented.

Another commonly observed behaviour was that Thu lectured in English for approximately 90% of the lesson, using Vietnamese occasionally to explain key points. She explained that:

I decided to use English to teach because it is one of the policies of our faculty. In addition, it should be like that because thanks to their English competence, they are able to understand lessons in English. I myself speak English well enough for my students to understand…it is my teaching style. If I use English often, even the bad students have to try their best to understand the lessons. They have to think twice and then have to try their best. Second, using English in an English class make it more academic. Not up to teachers or students’ like or dislike to use, to make the class more formal. This is their third semester; they are at upper-intermediate level. Third, when I teach in English, they can take notes in English, which will help them to revise later.

(SRI, Thu)

In viewing her teaching practice and the amount of talk she did in class, Thu recognised that she “dominated her students too much. In a SRI she stated:

I think it was my teaching method. Some of my colleagues told me that I am always dominating my students too much. For example, when I asked them a question, I was hurried to give them the answer. I think that I was afraid that my students don’t know anything. So I often give them the knowledge. However, this has advantage too. The students can get the knowledge very quickly. But “easy come, easy go”, so I think that I shouldn’t dominate the students too much like that. One of my former teachers told me that we should make questions to encourage students. If they can’t answer this question, we can ask them sub-questions. It would be time-consuming but effective. If I want the student to learn ten things and do it this way, the students can get at least
three out of ten. In my current way, they may gain nothing. I think I need to change my teaching method and beliefs. I control them too much, dominate too much.

(SRI, Thu)

Field note data showed that in her class as well as controlling the content and procedures for learning, Thu controlled the time for each task, while the students just followed her instructions without raising any questions or asking for more or less time. The rationale she gave for this was that because of the timeframe for the course and her experience teaching of IELTS writing tasks she knew how much time and material students could master in a lesson. As Thu said in a SRI:

There must be enough for the students to learn, not too much because they have so many other things to learn. I thought that for the writing task, the students needed only 20 minutes to write. There are about ten sentences for each writing task. So on average, they have only two minutes to write a sentence. Therefore, I asked them to write three sentences in ten minutes.

(SRI, Thu)

In the above excerpt Thu appears to have a preconceived idea of how much time it takes students to complete tasks, down to the minute. She does not make allowances for students who may work at a quicker or slower pace than what she had allocated for each writing task. Therefore, one could say that the flow of the lesson is entirely up to the teacher, and it is predetermined. However, Thu did express some awareness about learner autonomy. In her view, learner autonomy was associated with a responsibility to learn independently or in cooperation with the teacher. However, in her teaching practices, she used an authoritarian approach to teaching and gave her students little responsibility for their learning. When asked why she did not translate what she thought about learner autonomy into her classroom teaching, Thu identified herself as the key factor in hindering learner autonomy as she indicated that she did not clearly know how to apply it. She said:

Mismatch. I think there are two main reasons. First, our generation of teachers learnt out-of-dated knowledge so we are affected seriously. My previous lecturers had no knowledge or understanding about learner autonomy. This is a new recent term in Vietnam. Recently, people have focused on this. I am a teacher. I myself have great influence from the previous generation of teachers. Sometimes, we understand something like this, but how to apply or practice it is another issue. Second, when I
was a university student, I didn’t learn about learner autonomy. When I did my Master course, learner autonomy was just mentioned slightly in the methodology subject. And we know the thing is one thing, but apply it is another thing, totally different.

(Final interview, Thu)

The extract above showed that, to some extent, Thu believed that she did not know enough about learner autonomy to include it in her teaching practices, as a result she did not foster it in her class. Data showed that she followed the same teaching procedure for each observed lesson with no regard to incorporating learner autonomy into her pedagogy. Rather than taking on the responsibility of learning how to foster learner autonomy in her pedagogy, Thu placed the blame on external factors beyond her control, such as having to prepare students for exams. This data concurs with that expressed by the majority of teachers from Phase 1 of the current research who identified that they and their teaching practices were a constraint in fostering learner autonomy.

4.2.2 Participant 2 - Ngan

Ngan (a pseudonym), was born in 1961. She studied in the United Kingdom and received her Master degree in TESOL in Australia. Her experience included training teachers at the Vietnam-Australia Training Project and teaching an English for Academic Purposes course to Vietnamese scholars who were granted scholarships to study in Australia. When the project finished, Ngan worked as a lecturer of English at a big university in Hanoi. As part of her role, she acted as an Assistant Dean and so was responsible for managing teaching at her faculty. Ngan is currently lecturing at University Q.

Ngan’s beliefs about learner autonomy

Learner autonomy as a developmental process

Ngan described learner autonomy as a developmental process where the identity of an autonomous learner was a continual, developmental construct rather than something fixed. She had clear expectations of what characterised learner autonomy and how she believed an autonomous learner would act. For her, learner autonomy included such things as students deciding the objectives of their learning and selecting the learning materials. She stated that an ideal classroom for learner autonomy would be student-centred and that autonomous
students would be interested in their learning and would have positive attitudes towards learning, as these extracts from the initial interview with Ngan showed:

To be honest, we want to be student-centred, let students decide the objectives and select the materials. Step by step [we should] enable the students to be responsible and willing to learn...they [autonomous learners] have good attitudes towards learning…and they will learn more productively.

(Initial interview, Ngan)

It was Ngan’s belief that before students could successfully engage in their learning, they had to be motivated to learn. She indicated that motivation came first, and then learner autonomy, “If they are highly motivated, they are more autonomous; they will have interest of learning”. In her description about learner autonomy as a developmental process; however, Ngan also described that there were different levels and stages of autonomy. Ngan believed that her current students were not at the level of being autonomous learners. While she did not explain specific details for what she described as levels one and two for becoming autonomous in their learning, Ngan had clear expectations of what her current students would need to become autonomous:

They will become autonomous when they reach level three…it means when they are getting familiar with their learning. Before that (level three), they are as passive as when they were at high school. Thus, if we want them to be autonomous, we must wait until they reach level three.

(SRI, Ngan)

It was interesting to note that Ngan recognised that her beliefs about learner autonomy involved the teacher’s role in supporting the students. Ngan described that her practice of scaffolding was the key to helping her students to develop learner autonomy. These sources of support included creating resources such as extra activities and exercises beyond the prescribed curriculum. Thus, she believed that the teacher’s job was to “prepare” the students “to develop their ability” to learn once the support from the teacher was removed. According to Ngan this support involved providing supporting materials to enhance learning. This belief in the need to provide extra support for student learning came from her own learning preferences for activities and her teaching experience.

We can’t just ask the students to do. I mean that we have to give them the input, so they can give the output. The teacher is the person who creates the exercises and
activities to enhance students’ [learning]. We can’t ask them to give output without any support from us. We have to prepare them to develop their ability.

(Initial interview, Ngan)

This informed her teaching as she explained:

I wanted them to do the exercises. First I provided them with vocabulary and structures, then formed the outline and then wrote. I wanted them to develop step by step. If I had asked them to write right at the beginning, they wouldn’t have known anything, they wouldn’t have been able to write. If I had done like that, it would have been the same as throwing them into the river and asking them to swim without teaching how to swim.

(SRI, Ngan)

Ngan also indicated that she believed that helping students become autonomous included using some additional teaching strategies not generally employed in Vietnamese classrooms. She mentioned:

They [the students] live in Vietnam, so we need to…guide them via our activities, instead of memorisation. In a class, even under the same conditions, the input of each person is different because of their background. My teaching policy is: what I want them to learn, I must let them practice.

(SRI, Ngan)

Ngan expressed the belief that through the guided scaffolding by the teacher, it was possible for the levels of student ownership of learning to become the new norm of learning at school. In her current situation, she described that scaffolding and using supportive teaching techniques would enhance students’ abilities to become autonomous. However, Ngan also suggested that this approach to teaching was a challenge to her habitual practices “It is not suitable in Vietnam because it takes too much time to [train students to become autonomous learners]”. Rather than blaming students for not being more autonomous, Ngan indicated that it was her responsibility for creating more activities to support her students but cited a lack of time to develop extra resources to scaffold students’ learning as a barrier to developing learner autonomy in her students. These findings appear to concur with the results from Phase 1 of the current research where approximately 90% of teachers believed that students needed to be trained to adopt autonomous learning behaviours but that lack of resources were a constraint on teachers in fostering the development of learner autonomy.
While Ngan seemed to suggest that it was her role as a teacher to scaffold students to become autonomous learners, she also mentioned that she believed some learners could be autonomous learners without teachers’ support: “I think some of the students are in-born autonomous”. However, she did not expand further on this idea, but it does reflect the findings in Phase 1 where approximately 72% of teachers indicated that learner autonomy was achievable by certain students only, not by all students.

The data presented in the above section indicates that Ngan believed learner autonomy was a developmental process, rather than a fixed construct. She believed that she could help her students to foster learner autonomy step-by-step if she had more time to develop the resources needed for that support. However, she also revealed that while she expressed her belief that she tries to develop learner autonomy in her students, she also expressed the belief that Vietnam was not a suitable place for this development to occur.

*Learner Autonomy as an attribute*

Ngan made a clear distinction between the terms “students” and “pupils” in their ability to develop learner autonomy, as she said “the difference between high school students and university students is self-study. One is fully guided; the other is self-study”. She explained that only university students could become autonomous learners, “because teachers at university try to get students’ involvement more. In addition, the [university] students are more confident, so it will be easier for them to learn to be autonomous.” Pupils in high school were not able to become autonomous learners, presumably because they are too young and immature to take on such a personal responsibility.

Ngan suggested that teachers have a responsibility to foster learner autonomy because “self-study doesn’t mean we let students alone, do whatever they like but to prepare the students to be ready to develop their ability.” By this, Ngan suggested that with learner autonomy there would be interdependence between students and the teacher with the teacher being responsible for supporting students. She mentioned that the key to helping students to become autonomous was teaching the students “how to learn”, rather than by providing them with knowledge, as these extracts from the initial interview with Ngan showed:

If we provide them with knowledge all the time, they will become passive, it is not good, because when they graduate who will provide for them? If at school, they can
study on their own, that is self-study, then they have demand for learning and they will learn all their life. It will be good. I mean we need to teach them how to learn.

(Initial interview, Ngan)

Regarding her attempts to promote learner autonomy, Ngan recognised that fostering learner autonomy in teaching English included utilising students’ self-study time at home effectively: “I always think that students have to prepare in advance, before they attend the lesson. Class time is for practice and discussion to practice their skills and reactions”. This view informed Ngan’s teaching as she stated that “I have 50-50 policy in teaching writing that is, one week is for writing tasks at home, the following week is writing in the class”. Ngan adopted the requirement from the same government’s policy QD43-2007 (Moet, 2007) as Thu described earlier in this report. Ngan commented:

According to the accreditation policy, students must spend at least two hours at home for preparation for each class hour. For example, exercises like correcting mistakes or exercises on adjectives, they must do at home. But here, they don’t do at home. It was a waste of time. I told them that what they can do without my help or their friends’ support, they should do at home.

(Final interview, Ngan).

In her view, this process required time because “self-study is not their [the students’] habit”. She suggested that: “We need time to build up their habits”. Regarding the challenges that she faced in helping her students become more autonomous, Ngan blamed the limitation of resources at her campus, “[the students were not autonomous] because of the fact that our library system is so poorly-equipped. There aren’t many books. Frankly speaking, it is not a real library.” She argued that unless the library, especially the self-access resource centre was organised, learner autonomy could not be fostered.

Data presented in the above section showed Ngan’s beliefs about learner autonomy as both a process and an attribute of the learner and teachers played a significant role in developing learner autonomy. One recurrent theme, however, was that while teachers held a certain amount of responsibility as a supporter and facilitator of learner autonomy, Ngan believed that there were too many barriers in Vietnamese education to allow learner autonomy to happen. In this stance, Ngan was different to Thu by identifying that learner autonomy was a difficult concept to foster in Vietnamese education. This view suggests a cultural constraint not mentioned in Phase 1 of the research but that was identified in the
literature (Dardjowidjojo, 2001; Ho & Crookall, 1995).

The above data provided background information on Ngan’s beliefs about learner autonomy. The following sections provide data on her actual classroom behaviours so the connection between beliefs and practices could be identified.

**Ngan’s teaching practices regarding learner autonomy**

*The observed class*

At the time of data collection, Ngan taught 5 morning classes at one university and taught in the afternoon at another university. She also taught additional private classes to supplement her income. Ngan chose class S for the researcher to observe. The class had 14 intermediate students of English. These students had to study a foundation course in English and obtain an IELTS score of 6.0 in order to be eligible for enrolment in the university undergraduate course. Ngan taught this class twice a week teaching different skills, including writing on Tuesday morning and reading skills on Thursday morning. The researcher chose to observe a writing class on Tuesday mornings. The three SRIs were then conducted on Wednesday afternoons - one day after the video recordings were conducted.

The classroom was relatively small; however, it housed about 14 students. The desk arrangement was in U-shape, where the students could view their classmates and the teacher. The classroom was equipped with a basic green chalkboard. No other technological teaching aids such as a projector were used during the observed lessons.

*Institution-focused classroom (Course book-based Teaching)*

As reported above, Ngan expressed the belief that the teacher had the responsibility for managing the learning process in fostering learner autonomy. In observing Ngan’s teaching, however, it appeared that overwhelmingly decision making in relation to the lessons’ objectives, activities and tasks, resources and procedures were managed solely by the teacher. The orchestration of learning activities in all three observed lessons followed a very similar pattern to the lesson described below:

The classroom was arranged into rows of desks and chairs facing a chalkboard with a teacher’s desk nearby. After checking students’ attendance, Ngan asked her students to sit in pairs or groups of two or four [which she called “sit in even numbers”]. As the students prepared to move, Ngan asked her students: ‘Have you done all the
exercises in chapter 3 that we learnt today?’ Then she checked the students’ books and smiled because “Good, most of you have finished”. After that, she asked the students to discuss their answers in pairs for ten minutes. There were two male students who had not done the exercises at home. She asked them to work individually to finish the exercises instead of discussing in pairs. After that, she let the whole class check their exercises under her instruction. She sat on her chair and read out the question and nominated students to give the answer. When the student gave the answer, she said “No” if it was wrong and asked the student to correct under her guidance. She read the next question when the answer was correct. Sometimes, when Ngan found some phrases and expressions that she found interesting and useful and related to the topic, she wrote these on the board and explained their meaning in English for her students. The lesson went on in this manner until the class finished all five exercises in the chapter. The students participated well in the activities; however, they only did what the teacher told them to do, no more. There was not much discussion in the class. There were only two questions initiated by the students in relation to the new words.

(Field notes, OL1, Ngan, April)

These field observation notes illustrated Ngan’s actual teaching practice in her class. In all the three observed lessons, each lesson began with Ngan checking students’ attendance and arranging their seats, checking their homework, thus setting the scene for the day’s lesson. Unlike Thu, Ngan did not begin each of the lessons by informing students of the lesson’s objectives. Instead she introduced the content, particularly, the parts or chapter in the book that they had to deal with in each lesson. She explained that it was assumed by her as the teacher that students would understand the lesson’s objectives through their at-home-preparation of the course work because the objectives of the lessons were predetermined by the faculty through the course book. She said:

The students knew the objectives of the lesson in advance because they all have course books and I often assign them to read and do the exercises before attending the lectures.

(SRI, Ngan)

When asked why she did not let her students share some responsibility for deciding the objectives of the lesson, she explained that:
They can’t be responsible for their learning at this level. Honestly, at any level, it is important for students to have such characteristics (being autonomous learners). But that’s not their habit now, not until they are at level three or four.

(SRI, Ngan)

Field note data revealed that Ngan chose the activities and the materials for her students to do in the class, taking almost all the activities in her class from the course book. In contrast to her stated beliefs that the teacher had the responsibility for creating activities to promote learner autonomy, the only materials students brought to this class (other than their diaries) were their textbook and dictionary. The teacher and her students followed the content of the course book strictly with Ngan guiding her students to do all the exercises and activities without deviation as well as the sequence of each lesson as they were written in the course book. She justified this approach to teaching and learning as follows:

To be honest, recently, I am too busy to invest more in my teaching as I expected. But it is due to the students. I think it will be better to stick to the course book to teach...because right at the beginning, if the students don’t understand the basic terms and concepts, it will be difficult for them later. Later, when they have enough input, they will know how to do it on their own.

(SRI, Ngan)

According to Ngan, “the reading and writing syllabus and course books for this semester are good” and so there was no need for her to introduce new work. In addition she claimed that the cost of providing handouts for students was a deterrent to changing her regular teaching habits:

It is compulsory to follow course book compiled by the faculty. I thought that it was good to utilise all the available resources because it saved time and energy to make the handouts. Sometimes, I couldn’t come to the university often, I had to have the handouts copied and I had to pay for that. Moreover, this course book is a good one. However, there are some parts that need additional activities....I mean that all teachers must cover all the content in the book, depending on their students’ level, they teach quickly or slowly, but it is a must. You can ask the students to do as a reading activity, and then check their understanding; it is good to teach at least once.

(SRI, Ngan)
The pacing of the lesson was also strictly managed by the teacher. On her reflection of the observed lessons, Ngan explained that as the teacher she was the “time keeper” with the responsibility of keeping students on task. Field note data showed that as students did their exercises, Ngan walked amongst the group and either answered questions initiated by the students or asked questions to individual students to check their comprehension and then she sat and waited for them to finish. Ngan nominated which students were to give the answer aloud to the class, rather than have students volunteer to do so. Reflecting on this, Ngan said:

I am in a hurry so I want to do it quickly.... I called them randomly...to make students think that they would be called, so they all had to prepare the answers. I tried to do in many different ways to help students understand the lessons.

(SRI, Ngan)

What was also noticeable was that in the three observed lessons Ngan never asked students to choose their materials, activities or learning objectives, or make other learning decisions typically associated with autonomous learning. The students followed the teacher’s instructions and there was not much discussion in the class. The data from the observation showed that Ngan had a traditional class. Her teaching appeared to be teacher-centred in that she followed the content and the sequence of the course book very strictly. Ngan was the knowledge provider who controlled what was taught, when and under what conditions within her classroom. Viewing practice in that way, Ngan explained the reasons for her decisions in teaching, including external influences such as preparing students for exams:

...Because under the syllabus, the students have to learn all the topics given for their examinations. Therefore, I had to focus on those topics. That was the influence of the exams on teaching and learning. After each session, the students had to be able to write something. After week 9 or 10, I will have to base lessons on the examinations or the tests. For example, at the end of this semester, the students will be assessed on their ability to give opinions, so I have to focus on that type of writing. We have to base on the tests to teach. For easy tasks, we just try to make them more communicative. For example, on the day that I gave them handouts to learn about the descriptive adjectives, I asked them to do at home but they didn’t, so I didn’t have time to do the next activity. I wanted them to do the exercises, first with vocabulary and structures, then formed the outline and then wrote. I wanted them to develop step by step. If I had asked them to write right at the beginning, they wouldn’t have known
anything, they wouldn’t have been able to write. If I do like that, it will be the same as “throw them into the river and ask them to swim without teaching how to swim”.

(SRI, Ngan)

In the above excerpt, Ngan’s beliefs are in line with those from Phase 1 of the research and those beliefs expressed by Thu above where a major constraint to fostering learner autonomy was a focus of lessons on exam preparation. When asked for the reason why she did not teach students to develop learner autonomy, Thu explained that: “To be honest, I have never thought about learner autonomy before.” She also blamed her students’ passiveness for her current teaching practice. However, she thought that due to the working conditions of the teacher, she and other teachers did not invest more time in developing learner autonomy in their teaching.

To be honest, I sometimes don’t have enough time. Teachers of English are always over worked/overloaded and because of salary. Due to a very low salary system, the situation has become worst….teachers have to work for another universities to earn more money. Public universities can’t manage those things. That’s the reason why teachers can’t foster learner autonomy, because they can’t work whole-hearted for their teaching.

(Final interview, Ngan)

The above section presented data to illustrate Ngan’s enacted practices in the classroom and showed that these practices are teacher-centred. However, in line with the government policy QD43-2007-BGD (Moet, 2007), one key to helping her students to share the responsibility in the teaching-learning process was assigning students to read the lessons before class and do the exercises in the text book at home, which they would then discuss in the class the next day. Ngan believed that this process allowed the students more time for practical and additional work and the teacher could spend more time interacting with the students in class, doing collaborative activities instead of lecturing. However, observations in her class did not reveal that Ngan enacted her beliefs about learner autonomy. Ngan stated that the role of the teacher was to support the students when they became stuck. In her opinion, “for writing and reading lessons, it is critical for the students to prepare the lessons in advance”, otherwise, they “don’t have enough time to do anything else.” When reflecting on all three observed lessons about this point, Ngan explained that:
I often ask my students to study on their own at home. If they don’t do it, who knows what will happen in the class. So I must assign them the tasks to do at home. I told my students that ‘in class, we only deal with what we can’t do on their own’. So I often explained the instructions briefly and asked them to prepare at home. I think that for all the four language skills, it is necessary for the students to have practice in the class to manage their time effectively and guide them for the coming exams.

(SRI, Ngan)

In summary, it appeared that in Ngan’s view, teachers played an important role in supporting learners to become autonomous. However, as the data showed, Ngan acted as the controller of learning rather than a supporter or facilitator in developing learner autonomy in her class. Ngan also acknowledged her shortage of time, learning resources and having to prepare students for exams as the major barriers to develop learner autonomy in her teaching.

4.2.3 Participant 3 - Bich

Bich (a pseudonym), was born in 1975, and qualified with a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in English from a large Vietnamese university in 1994. Bich started teaching in 1995 and completed her Masters course in TESOL in 2004. At the time of data collection, Bich had been employed at University S for twenty years as a teacher of General English. Besides teaching, Bich was responsible for managing a group of 25 staff in her faculty of Foreign Language. Since she started working for University S, she had not attended any workshops or training on learner autonomy.

Bich’s beliefs about learner autonomy

Learner autonomy as an attribute

In the initial interview, Bich was asked what her beliefs about learner autonomy were. Bich described learner autonomy as being synonymous with self-study, a process whereby students learned on their own without a teacher. She pointed out that “autonomous students can...learn on their own, they are responsible for their own learning.” In particular, she had clear expectations of autonomous learning as being “active and responsible not only for their learning, but materials, orientation, all of them...” To this extent, Bich expressed that an autonomous learner was motivated and knew what and how to learn on their own, elaborating that:
Last year, I taught a class. There was a really outstanding student in that class. When other students needed twenty minutes to finish a task, it took her just five minutes to complete. So, while she was waiting for her friend to finish the task, she fell asleep. It was not nice to look at her. But if we assessed that this student was not autonomous, we would have been wrong. That student was autonomous, she studied on her own, and she studied a lot. Students now have many different approaches and ways to learn.

(Initial interview, Bich)

When asked about the extent to which she felt the teacher should foster learner autonomy, Bich commented that learner autonomy “isn’t in-born” but was developed by the teacher, “teachers should guide and orient their students. Sometimes, teachers don’t need to guide, the students can do, and this means they are autonomous. If teachers guide totally, it doesn’t mean autonomy.” In other words, learner autonomy for Bich was an attribute of being able to learn on one’s own, or individual learning outside the classroom.

Bich also pointed out that in order to foster autonomous learning, teachers needed to suggest available sources for the students to use to learn on their own. Bich stated in the initial interview that: “When my students asked me how to learn well, I suggested some books for them to study on their own. By doing the self-study book, I think they can become more autonomous for their learning at home.” She described that students could learn in many different ways thanks to the availability of the learning resources such as “self-study books for students” and they could learn independently without teacher’s support. Furthermore, Bich suggested that the teacher’s role was to provide or create materials and activities that could help learners to realise their goals, as well as provide instruction and feedback in the class and support other areas of autonomous development, such as out-of-class study. For example, Bich indicated in the initial interview that in her teaching, she “asked them [the students] to prepare the lessons in advance to have some background knowledge about topics such as celebrity or music.”

When asked about the extent to which she felt her current students were autonomous, Bich commented that her current students did not have any degree of autonomy because they did not take the initiative to do exercises or prepare their lessons before attending class. Bich believed that there was a direct connection between learner autonomy and student ability to do homework. Bich’s beliefs about learner autonomy mirror those expressed above by Thu
and Ngan and with the data from Phase 1 of the research that her students not all students were able to become autonomous learners. Bich also indicated that learner autonomy was synonymous with self-study. As has been argued in this thesis, teachers need to do more than direct students to do homework in preparation for the next day’s class to foster learner autonomy.

*Learner autonomy as a developmental process*

While in the initial interview, Bich suggested that learner autonomy was the same as self-instruction that is independent learning outside classroom, in the final interview, she later revised her definition as she continued with the research, describing learner autonomy as a developmental process with different levels of attainment. For example, learner autonomy at the lower level meant independent learning within the classroom and out of the classroom. When learners reached a higher level of autonomy they had more control of their learning within the classroom and there would be more negotiation and interdependence between learners and the teacher. She said:

I think it is, first, learners’ ability to study on their own in the class and at home. Second, they are active in all situations that teacher give them or even autonomous in changing the teaching methods of the teacher. That’s my thinking. If they are at higher level, they can be at the second point that I define. Before that level, they are just able to adapt to teacher’s guides and orientation or instructions. Better than that, they will be able to change to their needs and capacity.

(Final Interview, Bich)

It is not clear if Bich revised her beliefs about learner autonomy due to her participation in the research or which of the data collection methods may have triggered this revision. It is not known if watching herself and reflecting on her teaching through the SRIs caused her to think differently about learner autonomy in relation to her own teaching. More research into this area would help to clarify this point. Nevertheless, according to Bich to be autonomous learners in Vietnam, students needed to be like Western students, where the teacher acted as “facilitators” in the class, and this was the highest level of teaching and learning needed to develop learner autonomy. In this, Bich seemed to be describing learning autonomy as a more Western than Vietnamese approach to teaching and learning. When asked about the extent to which she felt her current students were autonomous, Bich
commented that her current students did not have any degree of autonomy because they were very dependent on the teachers. However, when she was asked about the potential to foster learner autonomy in the initial interview, Bich expressed negative beliefs. She believed that learner autonomy could be fostered but it depended on the students. She indicated in the initial interview that for Vietnamese students to become autonomous learners like Western students was an impossible task:

> It is suitable but at certain level. As I mentioned, they can be active and responsible for self-study. They are also able to be autonomous in class activities. They can ask teacher to modify or change activities in the class. That’s all. To be autonomous like Western students, like in the definition, it is impossible because Vietnamese students dare not to do and also they won’t want to do. I mean that to reach the level that the teacher is like a facilitator is impossible in Vietnam.

(Initial interview, Bich)

The above comment seemed to suggest that Bich felt there was an imposition of a Western concept on Vietnamese teaching and learning that did not sit well with either teachers or students. In a further comment Bich suggested there was a connection between learner autonomy and students’ level of English language proficiency and their confidence to take control of their learning. What she saw as a lack of autonomy in her students was as the result of a lack of English language proficiency and willingness to take control. Bich expressed her view that confident language learners were more likely to develop autonomy than those who lacked confidence. She said: “If they [learners] are more confident, they will become more autonomous.” She suggested a solution to make students become more confident was creating “an environment for the students to become more active and confident”, but did not elaborate further on this point.

While Bich indicated in the initial interview that she believed that learner autonomy could not be possible in Vietnam because of students’ level of English language proficiency, in the final interview, she also indicated that the examination regime and Vietnamese cultural characteristics were further constraints that hindered the development of learner autonomy. She also expressed that the authority of both the teacher and the institutions on learning made teachers feel uncomfortable about applying learner autonomy initiatives. In addition, Bich described that teachers in Vietnam may be afraid of handing over some of the responsibility for learning to learners for fear of losing control of the class as this kind of behaviour was not
traditionally done in Vietnamese education. These findings concur with those in Phase 1 of the research which indicated that over 84% of teachers held overall beliefs that they were responsible for learning in their classrooms. Bich indicated that she had a strict syllabus to follow and deadlines to meet which made the development of learner autonomy all the more difficult for her:

The school has more control on testing and assessment. They require us to give achievement test. All the objectives and the time frame are decided for us. So I can’t give my students too much control.... Teachers at schools always want to take control. They want to have that discipline in the class. This has influence on university students. The students can’t become free in their class.

(Final interview, Bich)

**Bich’s teaching practices regarding learner autonomy**

**The observed class**

Bich’s class consisted of 30 students at the Pre-Intermediate level of English. They were in their second semester. Besides the *New English File* (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2006) as the course book, students were given a self-study book which was compiled by the staff at the university. During each semester, students had one mid-term achievement test which was designed by the class teacher. At the end of semester, they sat in an examination for the final test which was designed by the faculty.

The physical arrangement in the classroom was that traditionally found in Vietnamese classrooms. Desks were in eight rows arranged in two blocks facing the front of the classroom where the teacher typically stood or sat. Here, students couldn’t see the faces of their classmates, but the teacher could see all of their faces. There was a blackboard and a blue-board, but no projector. The students sat two to three at each long table.

**Institution-focused teaching**

Overall, through the three observed lessons, Bich demonstrated many instances where she carried the main responsibility for managing the various aspects of the learning process, such as deciding what to learn, how to learn, when and with what resources to learn, as well as reflecting on and evaluating what had been learned. Bich followed more or less the same sequence of presenting her lesson in all three observations. In the following section, the
observational data in one observed lesson are presented to illustrate Bich’s behaviour in her class:

Bich provided some simple questions or examples to introduce the lesson content [the grammar items to be taught]. She gave some examples which she wrote on the board and expected her students to write these examples down in their workbooks. Then, Bich asked the students to individually do an exercise on page 16 in their books. After one minute, she asked the whole class to read aloud their answers. Bich then moved on to the next activity - which was, listening. Bich played a cassette-player for the students to listen to check the answers again. She then asked her students to close their books to listen to the tape and had them repeat the words and phrases. The next part in the lesson was Reading. Bich asked the students to do reading exercise in their workbooks, filling in the information related to the day’s lesson. She then asked them to close their books and answer her questions including: How many paragraphs are there? What is the paragraph about? These questions were asked as a whole class activity. The bell rang and Bich let her students have a break.

(Field notes, OL1, Binh, April)

It should be noted that the target grammar items to be taught had been predetermined in the syllabus and were included for language skill development such as speaking, listening, reading and writing as prescribed in the unit of lesson. Bich guided her students to complete all the exercises in the book. She instructed them very carefully with fixed time allowed for each activity. Then, the whole class checked the answers together. Sometimes Bich pointed out some linguistic phrases and expressions and wrote these on the board for her students to jot down in their notebooks. Some of the students were attentive and took notes. Others kept talking or doing their personal things such as messaging on their iPhones or were reading materials not related to the lesson. It was observed that the students sat in the same place in each lesson. With all the aspects of the teaching and learning process, Bich was the authority in the class and acted as a source of knowledge, deciding on what to learn and how to learn. She chose classroom activities and provided feedback on students’ performance in the classroom.

Reflecting on the responsibility that she had over selecting and deciding the content of the lesson and the learning objectives of the lesson, Bich explained that they were predetermined by “the syllabus”. She explained that while the syllabus dictated the content to
be covered within a given term, the teacher’s decisions were guided by this timeframe. Thus, she and the students had no choice other than following all the activities and exercises in the text book.

All the objectives of the lessons are pre-decided by the syllabus. I must follow the syllabus...we chose this book as the course book because of its strengths to improve the all four skills in learning English. Secondly, when teachers design tests, they have to be based on this book. So I decided to focus my teaching in all the content of the course book. Also, it depends on students’ English competence. Teachers can decide to improve or change the activities.

(SRI, Bich)

When asked about the underlying reasons for her responsibility regarding the choice of learning activities, she explained that the students did not possess the ability to take control of their learning and trying to train them to become autonomous would be time-consuming. Bich commented in a stimulated recall interview that:

I didn’t let my students prepare the activities because they couldn’t do as I expected them to do; and as a result we wouldn’t meet the objectives of the lesson. Also it would take more time.

(SRI, Bich)

Field note data showed that Bich was the person who chose the technique and teaching methods for her lessons. Bich believed that the responsibility for making the decisions about the teaching methods and techniques rested with the teacher because of her teaching experience. In a stimulated recall interview, she said:

It depends on the input, I will decide my methods. I thought that the students had known the theory from junior schools, but they rarely used it. I thought that it would be good for them to learn [with that method]. They are low level students. That’s the way we have to teach for those people, from the very basic knowledge and then more difficult later.

(SRI, Bich)

When asked for the reasons for her behaviour of not sharing the responsibility with the students, Bich identified “mainly due to the students” because her students were not engaged in the learning process, indeed, she described them as passive learners. She commented in the final interview that: “If I ask them to do, they will do. If not, they won’t”.

134
According to her, the current students were not only passive but lazy so they just followed what she told them to do.

It was noticeable from the three observed lessons that the students in Bich’s class appeared to be obedient. They followed all the instructions and guidelines from the teacher without any questions or comments. For example, in the first observed lesson, when the teacher began her lesson by raising some simple questions and pointed at the students to call for the answer, they answered the questions when they were pointed at; or when Bich asked her students to do exercise in the book, they did the exercises under instructions. Another example of their obedience was that whenever Bich asked her students to work in pairs or groups, they did as her request although it was observed that they hesitated to participate in group activities.

It was noted that the students appeared to be unwilling to voice their opinions. For example, they were extremely embarrassed if asked to read out aloud the answer in front of their peers or to answer questions in class. The students did not ask the teacher questions during class time. Throughout the three observations it was noticed that, in class, when the students were asked if they understood something, they generally answered “yes” or sat silent, and then questioned their friends for clarification. The students also appeared to be embarrassed and uncomfortable when using English in a group discussion or when giving their answer to the teacher, but as required by the teacher, they talked in English in front of the class or with the teacher, but they talked in Vietnamese when they worked in groups or pairs.

Through the data reported in this section, it was observed that Bich practiced a lot of authority and control in her class. While it appeared to the researcher that her students, to some extent, were capable of taking responsibility for some aspects of their learning if allowed, Bich did not believe that her students were able to take such control because of their low English competence; therefore, she did not give them the control and the students did not try to exercise this control. They simply followed the teacher’s instructions. As a result, there was no autonomy in the class in the three observed lessons. When asked for the reason why she did not foster learner autonomy, Bich explained in the final interview:

I didn’t use it (learner autonomy) simply because it was not available here. Second, as I have told you my understanding about learner autonomy but the practice depended on the students to give them the control… The school has more control on testing and
assessment. They require us to give achievement tests. All the objectives and the time frames are decided for us. All the teachers supply for their students are [lessons to prepare them] for the assessment. So I can’t give my students too much control.

(Final interview, Bich)

The above data concurs with that reported by Thu, Ngan and results from Phase 1 of the research which suggests that teachers take on the responsibility for student learning for a variety of reasons such as being constrained by the syllabus, the examination regime and students’ inability or unwillingness to take responsibility for developing learner autonomy. In short, it could be seen that Bich did not apply, or even desire to apply, learner autonomy in her class and so did not put any effort into fostering learner autonomy in her teaching practices.

4.2.4 Participant 4 - Ha

Ha (a pseudonym), was born in 1975 and began her professional career as a teacher of English at University N in Vietnam in 2008. After a number of years working in a variety of settings, she was first employed by the university as a part-time ESL teacher and after three years she became a full-time teacher there. She completed a Bachelor of English degree and then went on to complete a Master of TESOL in 2006 at a Hanoi university. Ha was beginning her fifth year as an EFL teacher at University N at the time of data collection. Ha has not had any formal training in relation to learner autonomy or any professional development workshops organised related to this topic by her university.

Ha’s beliefs about learner autonomy

Learner autonomy as an attribute

Ha described learner autonomy as the “students’ ability and responsibility for studying on their own” without help from a teacher. An important feature Ha described to identify autonomous learners was that they were students responsible for doing their prescribed homework. Ha commented in the initial interview that: “we can identify them [autonomous learners]. When I checked my students’ homework which I often force them to do, some of them did all the homework. Those were autonomous.”

When asked about the teacher’s role in fostering learner autonomy, Ha indicated in
the initial interview that she believed becoming autonomous learners was the students’ responsibility not the teacher’s: “I can’t always ask them to do this or that. It is impossible. It is not compulsory. It is optional. My viewpoint is to let student be responsible for their learning.” Ha also indicated in the initial interview that learner autonomy in her teaching could be fostered. She believed that the students could be autonomous thanks to the self-study hour that the faculty arranged for them each week. She said: “We have an hour for self-study every week.” Ha expressed the beliefs that the notion of learner autonomy was synonymous with self-study and learning without a teacher, which allowed the students to take responsibility for their self-study.

In the final interview, Ha included other elements when she described learner autonomy as active learning. She characterised autonomous learners as “active, they are interested in their learning”. Ha also described that there was a connection between learner autonomy and motivation; however, she identified that if students were motivated to learn, teaching for her would be more enjoyable:

If students are motivated, teaching will be less boring and I will be more motivated with my teaching. Students will learn much better. I mean if students are motivated, teachers enjoy teaching more.

(Initial interview, Ha)

Ha also pointed out that in order to become motivated, the learners needed to achieve at an appropriate level of English proficiency and at this level students became more aware of their own learning capabilities:

Of course, there are some students who are willing to learn, but the number is just few…just students who had some background in English so they like learning English more than other students and are aware of their learning.

(Initial interview, Ha)

When asked about the extent to which she felt her current students were autonomous, Ha described that her students did not have any degree of learner autonomy because of their low motivation in learning English. She explained that “when they are autonomous, they have no pressure for their study. They study for their interest. But English here is not their interest...they just learn to pass the exams”. In this case, Ha indicated that her students’ learner autonomy came from their willingness and interest in learning. Ha also identified problems with her learners’ attitudes and motivation as limiting factors for the development
of learner autonomy, as she said: “I controlled them like that but they didn't concentrate on their learning, they were doing so many odds things in the class...this is due to the students themselves, their attitudes.” She described that the students were not qualified enough in terms of their English proficiency, which led to the lack of motivation to learn so, consequently, learner autonomy could not be fostered among her current students. This belief that students’ level of English was a major factor in their ability to be autonomous was common with the participants in Phase 2 of the research. It is not clear whether the teachers were using English competency as an excuse for not utilising practices to foster learner autonomy; this would seem to be an area worth further research.

When asked about the extent to which she felt she could promote learner autonomy in her own class, Ha indicated that learner autonomy could be fostered in her teaching context by making students aware of their learning and having an interest in learning by making interesting lessons. She described some activities that she had employed to help her students become autonomous including “talking with her students about the importance of English” which she believed would make them aware of their learning and be motivated to learn.

I think teachers must help them realise the importance of English, especially after they graduate. Whenever, I have a new class, I often talk about it with my new students. Some of them understand and they are motivated in their learning, while others are not happy to learn. In my opinion, there are some different types of this ability (learner autonomy). The teacher’s role is to help students to have some interest in learning. In order to have interest, they must understand the lesson first. In fact, students want to be autonomous, but they don’t understand the lesson so they can’t be so. A student becoming autonomous depends on teachers’ teaching lessons. If we have suitable lessons and syllabus, they must be autonomous. Thus, we – teachers have to teach them step by step.

(Final interview, Ha)

Regarding the challenges she felt she faced in fostering learner autonomy in her teaching, Ha identified the time to deliver the pre-set syllabus as a barrier because she and her students did not have enough time for learning English, and, thus, no time to become autonomous in their learning:

It is necessary to change the syllabus. The students will work harder and be more motivated to learn because they will have more time for English. At present, students
learn English just one day a week, they forget very quickly. Sometimes, I check their homework and check previous lessons, they can’t remember anything about the lesson they learned the day before.

(Final interview, Ha)

This finding concurs with earlier data noted in this chapter that the syllabus is a constraining factor in fostering learner autonomy. As noted above, Ha had diverging views about learner autonomy. The teacher associated autonomy with learner motivation and independent learning, irrespective of learner involvement in the learning process or decision-making or sharing of authorship in the class. However, overall, the data suggested that Ha did not fully understand the concept of learner autonomy. The following section examines her teaching practices in regard to learner autonomy to show the association between Ha’s beliefs and her teaching practices. However, it should be stated that it is unreasonable to expect the teacher to foster the growth of learner autonomy when she herself did not know what it was to be an autonomous learner.

*Ha’s teaching practices regarding learner autonomy*

*The observed class*

Ha taught 6 classes from Monday to Saturday during the semester of data collection. She invited the researcher to observe one of her classes on Thursday afternoons and participate in the interviews on Friday mornings. Lifelines (Hutchinson, 1998) was utilised as the course book because the students were enrolled at the pre-intermediate level of English. During each semester, students had one mid-term achievement test which was designed by the class teacher. At the end of semester, they sat in an examination for the final test which was designed by the faculty.

The classroom was big enough for 100 people. There were forty long heavy tables and attached benches which were arranged into two blocks. There was an aisle between the two blocks for the teacher and students to move around. There was a long blackboard and a projector set in the front of the classroom. The teacher’s desk was in front of the class. There were 52 students on the class list, normally 40 to 45 students attended. Those who attended the class sat four to five students at one long table. The teacher’s teaching zone was in the front of the class, near her desk or blackboard or the projector screen.
The most distinguished feature of the three observed lessons in Ha’s class was that the teacher and students followed the course book strictly. The teacher divided her lesson according to the skills and language points (Grammar points or vocabulary) in the textbook. Each lesson started with grammar items which the students were strongly advised to follow up on. After Ha presented all of the “necessary knowledge” for the lesson, she asked the students to complete exercises which, for the first lesson, she compiled for them and in the second and third lessons were exercises in the students’ workbook. The following section reports on her practices regarding learner autonomy in her class in one observed lesson.

To begin the lesson, Ha checked the students’ understanding about their previous lesson by asking pointed questions on the content of that lesson. She then asked them to open the book to page 94 and then to look at the projector screen where she prepared some slides of places including Eiffel tower, bowling, etc. that were found in the textbook. There were eight pictures about eight different places in the world. Ha asked the students to identify a place, and then she taught them how to pronounce the word for each place, having them repeat the words after her, such as “pub”, “restaurant”, “bowling alley”. Ha then introduced the topic of the lesson for the day: “inviting, accepting and declining invitations”. She introduced some phrases and expressions to invite people to go to various places showing on the screen and asked the students to repeat the phrases. On the next five slides Ha showed five expressions to accept an invitation when invited to some place. She said:” Look at the screen. There are five expressions you can use to invite someone. Now, read after me!” She read first the first phrase and her students read the phrase after her. Then, she showed six expressions to decline an invitation that she called “disagreeing”. She asked: “Now, read after me!” and the students repeated each expression that she read. Ha asked the students to do the first listening task in their workbooks: listen and decide the order of the pictures according to the conversations. She explained the instructions on how to do the task and then twice played the tape of a recorded conversation that related to the pictures in the textbook. Then, she told the students that she thought this task was difficult. She asked them to open page 114 to look at the typescripts and played the tape again. She walked around the class and found two
students whose book was not at page 114, so she helped them open their books to the correct page. The students were directed by the teacher to listen to the recorded conversation as they read it in their course book. Rather than listen to the tape another time, the teacher asked the students to read the typescripts again before asking them to read the script and listen to the tape again. To check students’ understanding of what she had presented, Ha asked them to work in pairs/groups under her instructions to do the activities/exercises in their workbooks. She allowed them a fixed amount of time to do the exercises. As the class was ending, Ha reviewed the lesson. She repeated the main content of the lesson (the focus); then, assigned them some homework.

(Field notes, OL1, Ha, April)

The sequence of this first observed lesson was consistent with that of the other observed lessons. The lessons were pre-determined by the teacher and the course book. In each observed lesson, Ha reviewed the content that they had done in the previous lesson and introduced new content for each lesson at the beginning of the class. This data concurs with that already reported in this chapter that approximately 86% of teachers in Phase 1 of the research indicated that they held overall responsibility for teaching and learning in their classes. When asked for the reason why she did not encourage her students to become more responsible for their learning, she explained that due to her students’ low ability in English they were not ready to take on such a responsibility. She said: “If I had done like that [let the students be responsible for their learning], there would have been few students who could understand, especially with listening and speaking skills.” Viewing her videoed teaching practice, Ha said in a SRI that:

I targeted for the examinations. I had to base [my lessons] on the exam structures and content of the test. In particular, I focused on teaching grammar and expressions because my students will have tests on these grammar rules. I had too little time; therefore, I had to work at full capacity to provide the students with all the required knowledge and information for their coming exams.

(SRI, Ha)

In the above interview extract, Ha was suggesting that a main reason for her decision in choosing the content and procedures of the lesson was test-oriented. She was confined in her teaching by students’ need to pass the exams. This data also agrees with that already
described above in this chapter that examinations are a major constraint to fostering learner autonomy. In addition, Ha described that she did not ask her students to select the learning materials because of her personal teaching experience with the class. In the SRI, she said:

I used to ask my students to do that, but I didn’t succeed. The students prepared nothing. I mean students are very passive, they just learn what we teach them, no more. You see, the previous lesson, I taught them but they immediately forgot all. If I taught differently I am sure they will understand nothing.

(SRI, Ha)

When Ha assigned students with a task to do, she walked around the class to monitor that they were on task. The rationale she gave for this was her students’ lack of motivation to learn and their laziness. Viewing her teaching practice, she explained that:

I controlled them like that but they don’t concentrate on their learning, they were doing so many odds things in the class. This makes it unpleasant for me to teach. It is difficult to teach such students. This is due to the students themselves, their attitudes. Look at this girl, even when I opened the book for her, she still didn’t know where the transcript was. Some of them were doing listening comprehension, but they didn’t concentrate on listening, they just kept watching me. If I moved far away from their seats, they stopped looking at the book immediately.

(SRI, Ha)

While observing her lessons, the researcher noted that while Ha used English most of the time in her classroom, sometimes she used English first, and then translated what she had said into Vietnamese while at other times she just used Vietnamese. She explained in SRI sessions that she did not believe that her students would be able to understand what she was explaining to them in English so she needed to translate the information into Vietnamese. She explained it that depended on the students’ current knowledge and the content as to whether she would decide to use English or Vietnamese to teach. For example, in a SRI she said: “Because that was a revision lesson I wanted to use Vietnamese to help them understand the lesson more easily. I usually use Vietnamese to review for the students because if I use English, they won’t understand the lessons.” This seems a rather surprising comment in relation to the fact that the lesson being taught was English, but may indicate why Ha did not believe that her students were capable of being autonomous in their learning.
It was observed that Ha often lectured using a projector instead of solely writing work from the textbook lessons on the board. Explaining her decision for doing this decision, Ha said:

I thought applying ICT helped me save energy. The lessons would be more interesting and easy for students to understand. Visual aids help students remember easily. I don’t have to write much on the board which saves a lot of time. I also don’t have to explain much. I can use English to give the lecture. If I hadn’t used slides [in English], I would have presented in Vietnamese so the students could understand.

(SRI, Ha)

What the researcher noticed in all lessons that she observed was that Ha chose to present the information/content to the students in a highly structured format, leaving little opportunity for student input into the lesson or opportunity to deviate from the set lesson plan. Ha presented the content for the day’s lesson then asked the students to do the corresponding exercises in their workbooks. This teacher-centred approach did not appear to encourage students to adopt any responsibility for their learning other than to memorise the content of the lessons. Reflecting on this technique, Ha said:

According to my teaching experience, my students can’t learn that way [pick up new words themselves and learn]. Some of the lazy students even ignore new words. Thus, I’d better teach them directly…I planned the lessons carefully with suitable activities so that even the worst students in the class could understand and use the tense, the structures and do exercises. I did not focus only on the good students. I had to do it again and again and again so they can memorise the lesson in class. You must know that my students are all beginners; they can’t study on their own.

(SRI, Ha)

She agreed that “learning like this makes the students passive” but the reason was “otherwise, the learning results wouldn’t be under my control. It wouldn’t be as good as I [a teacher] wanted”. It was noticeable that in the three observed lessons, the students did not appear to be motivated to participate in the lesson. Indeed the students appeared to be unwilling to participate in the activities that the teacher assigned them. For example, in the first observed lesson, when Ha asked the students to look at the transcript to listen, they sat in silence or did something else including chatting, using their phones or otherwise being off-task. When Ha walked around the class, the students acknowledged that the teacher was
about to approach them and pretended to do the exercises by holding their pens up for writing or by looking at their books. However, when the teacher moved to another place, the students went back to doing their private things. When they were asked to answer a question, they hesitated to speak out in front of the class; some of the students told Ha that they could not do the exercises in the book. However, whenever, Ha presented the grammar points and asked the students if they understood the lessons, they said “yes”. It was also noted that when Ha asked the students to follow all the content and the activities in the book, the students did not ask for any clarification or changes to help them learn nor did they give any comments beyond answering the teacher’s questions.

As presented above, Ha did not appear to foster learner autonomy in her class. It was interesting to note that while the new curriculum (issued by the government) aims to promote a communicative, learner-centred, and task-based approach, Ha, like the other teachers in Phase 2 of this research, kept teaching in the traditional teacher-centred way. Reflecting on all of her behaviours in the class, Ha explained that she did not think about fostering learner autonomy and she did not know how to do that. She said in the final interview:

I don’t know how to practice regarding learner autonomy. I want a professor or a native English-speaking teacher to come to teach my class. I want to observe to see what they will do....There should be training course on how to encourage students. There should be. I need to attend that course.

(Final interview, Ha)

4.2.5 Summary of Phase 2

This section presents the results and findings as they emerged from the data gathered from Phase 2 of the research. These findings showed the beliefs teachers in this study held about learner autonomy including different aspects of learner autonomy: the nature of learner autonomy, teachers’ responsibility, students’ responsibility, the constraints, approaches to foster learner autonomy. This chapter also indicates how those beliefs were translated into classroom practices as well as factors affecting that transfer. Table 4.10 below summarises the beliefs the teachers in the study held about learner autonomy.
### Table 4.10

*Teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of LA</th>
<th>Thu</th>
<th>Ngan</th>
<th>Bich</th>
<th>Ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of LA</td>
<td>LA as an attribute</td>
<td>LA as a developmental process</td>
<td>LA as an attribute</td>
<td>LA as an attribute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s role</td>
<td>Controller Knowledge provider</td>
<td>Controller Knowledge provider</td>
<td>Controller Knowledge provider</td>
<td>Controller Knowledge provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous learners</td>
<td>Motivated learners</td>
<td>Some are in-born autonomous</td>
<td>Learn on their own and are motivated. They are active and responsible.</td>
<td>Be responsible for doing homework. Be active and interested in learning. Motivated learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraints</td>
<td>Teachers’ lack of understanding of LA Learners’ attitudes &amp; motivation</td>
<td>Limitation of the resources on the campus</td>
<td>Students’ proficiency, Examination regime, Cultural characteristics</td>
<td>Unmotivated learners. Pre-set syllabus Examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to foster LA</td>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>Scaffolding strategies Supportive teaching strategies -Creating more activities -Use the students’ self-study time effectively</td>
<td>Teacher should guide and orient students. -Suggest available resources (self-study book)</td>
<td>Have an hour for self-study every week. Make students aware of their learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 4.10, the teachers in this study held a wide range of beliefs about learner autonomy. They viewed learner autonomy as self-study, independent learning, and a developmental process. They believed that there was a connection between learner autonomy and English language proficiency. Another issue that emerged from the data was that teachers characterised autonomous learners with motivated and confident learners. It appeared that institutional factors including the testing system and syllabus were seen as the main constraint that hindered learner autonomy. The final issue that emerged from the data was that despite the barriers that the teachers identified, all four teachers were strongly in favour of fostering learner autonomy if they had targeted support.
Observational data showed that all the four teachers had teacher-centred teaching with traditional physical classroom arrangement and institution-focused classrooms. Table 4.11 displays the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their actual teaching practices and the underlying reasons, factors affecting their behaviours in the class.

Table 4.11
Relationships between Teachers’ beliefs and their actual practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Actual practice</th>
<th>Underlying reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>LA as an attribute</td>
<td>Institution-focused teaching</td>
<td>Teacher’s beliefs about LA (no beliefs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Habitual Teaching</td>
<td>Students’ attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher-centred approach</td>
<td>Teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Test-oriented teaching</td>
<td>Teaching habit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional classroom context</td>
<td>Pressure of exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Policy of the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngan</td>
<td>LA as a developmental process</td>
<td>Institution-focused teaching</td>
<td>Teachers’ beliefs/experience about Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LA as an attribute</td>
<td>Textbook-based teaching</td>
<td>Teacher’s time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional classroom context</td>
<td>Teacher’s habitual teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher’s beliefs about the subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Economical issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bich</td>
<td>LA as an attribute</td>
<td>Institution-focused teaching</td>
<td>Students’ proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LA as a developmental process</td>
<td>Textbook-based teaching</td>
<td>Syllabus/timeframe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher-centred approach</td>
<td>Exam/testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional classroom context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha</td>
<td>LA as an attribute</td>
<td>Institution-focused teaching</td>
<td>Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Test-oriented teaching</td>
<td>Students’ attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional classroom context</td>
<td>Syllabus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were many factors affecting their behaviours in the class revealed in this chapter, but the two most influential factors, as shown in the data, seem to be institutional factors and
teacher’s personal factors. Discussion of the findings for this phase of the research will be discussed in next chapter.

4.3 SUMMARY

This chapter presents the salient data and findings from Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the current research. As presented above, Phase 1 of the research provided a general overview of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy, which helped provide the framework for Phase 2 of the research. Identified themes from the research include the shaping of teachers’ beliefs regarding learner autonomy, teachers’ lack of understanding of the concept, learner autonomy, constraints to fostering learner autonomy, teacher’s beliefs about students’ capabilities to achieve learner autonomy; the perceived role of motivation in developing learner autonomy; and the influence of social-cultural factors on the relationship between beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy. The following summarises the overall findings from the two phases of the research and the additional findings from Phase 2 of the research for each of the themes.

The results of the current research identified that overall teachers lacked understanding about the concept of learner autonomy. Teachers held various beliefs about learner autonomy including misconceptions among which is that learner autonomy is synonymous with self-study or independent learning without the help and support of a teacher. While the teachers had well-defined views of their responsibility in the teaching and learning process, they held negative views or were unsure if their students had the ability to take control of their own learning. Perceived constraints to achieving learner autonomy included students’ lack of English language, that learner autonomy is achievable by only some students- not all, the focus on examinations, lack of clarity about governmental policy in relation to learner autonomy, strict adherence to teaching the syllabus, limited resources, teachers’ knowledge about learner autonomy, and the lack of professional development training to understand the concept and how to apply it in the classroom.

In addition to these overall findings, some salient findings emerged from phase 2 of the research. For example, teachers believed that learner autonomy was a developmental process only achieved by students towards the end of their course. Some of the participants connected learner autonomy to student motivation, that is, if students were motivated they could become autonomous in their learning. Some participants suggested that their students
were too lazy to take control of their learning and so would never achieve learner autonomy. They also perceived cultural constraint that hinders learner autonomy in their contexts. For example, some participants suggested that the Vietnamese education system did not encourage the development of learner autonomy. It was only through the adoption of Western cultural practices that learner autonomy could be achieved.

It is important to note that no matter what they understood about learner autonomy the four teachers in Phase 2 of the research were similar in their teaching practices, which was teacher-centred and institution-focused teaching without the inclusion of teaching practices that would foster learner autonomy. In other words, the objectives of lessons, the teaching and learning strategies and techniques used in the classroom were decided by the teacher; learning and evaluation were also controlled by the teacher. The teachers in phase 2 of the research suggested that they could not foster learner autonomy because of the constraints of their teaching contexts, the stringent syllabus, and adherence to traditional classroom arrangements and because of themselves as teachers in that they did not understand what learner autonomy was and so did not know how to apply it in the classroom. In Chapter 5, a detailed discussion and interpretation of the data are presented by integrating the findings of the two phases of the research and integrating the findings with the theoretical perspectives of this study.
Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter a formal discussion of the research results is provided. In the current study, learner autonomy is defined as learner’s willingness and ability to take responsibility to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate his/her learning in tasks that are constructed in negotiation with and support from the teacher. This definition contains two essential components: learners’ responsibility for their learning and teachers’ responsibility in supporting learners’ to develop autonomy in their learning. Teachers in the current research showed a lack of understanding about learner autonomy and about their students’ abilities to become autonomous learners in the Vietnamese educational context. Additionally, it was found that teachers’ training was not targeted in the development of learner autonomy. In the following sections, the findings of the current study are examined and discussed with reference to previous studies in the field.

In analysing the data and findings, three main themes emerged. These can be summarised as: (1) Teachers’ beliefs regarding the concept of learner autonomy; (2) The degree of alignment between teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy; (3) The influence of social-cultural factors on the relationship between beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy. Section 5.1 discusses teachers’ beliefs about the concept of learner autonomy. Section 5.2 discusses teachers’ perceptions of their roles in fostering learner autonomy in their class. Section 5.3 discusses the social-cultural contexts affecting the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their behaviour regarding learner autonomy. The last section (section 5.4) is the summary of the chapter.

5.1 TEACHERS’ BELIEFS REGARDING THE CONCEPT OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

5.1.1 Linguistic factors

The findings of the current study show that the participants did not have a clear understanding of the term learner autonomy. Their confusion may in part result from a linguistic issue where learner autonomy is translated from English into the Vietnamese language in a number of ways. For example, the equivalent term for learner autonomy in general is “chủ động của người học” [learner autonomy or autonomy of the learner].
However, this translated term is too general to understand because it does not identify what dimensions of learner autonomy are being discussed, which is necessary to do in Vietnamese. Therefore, translation of the term may lead to a wide range of different interpretations in different contexts. Among the different translations from English into Vietnamese, the two most commonly used terms are “tính tự chủ, chủ động của người học” (which refers to learners’ characteristics of responsibility) and “sự tự chủ, chủ động của người học” (refers to learners’ behaviour/situation of being responsible). The word “tính” in Vietnamese refers to the characteristics or personality of a person. This interpretation indicates that learner autonomy is innate rather than learnt. For example, Ha defined learner autonomy as “tính tự chủ, chủ động, tự giác học của người học” [learner’s characteristic of being responsible for their own learning]. The word “sự” or “việc” refers to the behaviour/situation of the person. For example, Ngan said “sự chủ động của người học trong việc tự học là chưa có trong đối tượng này” [the behaviour of being responsible for their own learning is not for the current students]. Both terms were used by the four teachers in the current research at various times for various reasons. Bich defined learner autonomy as “tính chủ động tức là tự học, tự may mò để học” [learners’ ability to study on their own without teachers’ support] (Bich, Initial interview). In her final interview, she said: “Cái sự tự chủ động của sinh viên ấy, chị nghĩ là khả năng tự học, tự học trên lớp cũng như ở nhà. Thứ hai là chủ động trong những tình huống của giáo viên đưa ra hoặc là chủ động trong việc thay đổi cách dạy của giáo viên luôn”. [I think it is, first, learners’ ability to study on their own in the class and at home. Second, they are active in all situations that teachers give them or even autonomous in changing the teaching methods of the teacher]. These data indicated that the teachers used the term, learner autonomy, differently for different situations. This finding is not surprising considering the confusion that exists with the term in Vietnamese.

In Vietnamese, the word “tự” or “tự chủ” (self) refers to something you do on your own or by yourself. The word “chủ động” in Vietnamese refers to demonstrating initiative without others’ support or help. This interpretation may be one reason why the teachers defined learner autonomy as “self-study” [tự học] or “self-regulation” [tự giác, chủ động] or “independent learning” [tự học, chủ dòng học tập]. For instance, Ha said: “Learner autonomy là nói tới việc học tự học của học sinh, tự giác trong việc học tập.” [learner autonomy is the same as self-study”. Thu defined learner autonomy as “cái khả năng cũng như sự tự nguyện của sinh viên trong việc tự học, tự làm chủ việc học của mình” [Learner autonomy means
learners’ willingness and capacity of self-study and being responsible for their own learning]. Approximately 27% of the surveyed teachers defined learner autonomy as self-study or self-instruction which means learning without a teacher. Thus, it is noteworthy that the meaning of the Vietnamese translations may result in different interpretations of the term by the four teachers.

In the educational documents in Vietnam, the term “tính tích cực, chủ động, năng lực tự học, tự nghiên cứu của người học” [Learners (characteristic of being) engaged and motivated in learning and capacity to learn on their own or without the support from teacher] is used in a governmental document (Thu tuong, 2003, p. 7) or “ý thức tự giác trong học tập, năng lực tự học, tự nghiên cứu” [the characteristics and situation of being responsible for learning, the ability to learn on their own] is used in Law on education (Vietnamese Assembly, 2005, p. 12). It is important to note that in these two important educational documents, the terms with the word “tính” which refers to learner’s characteristics of being responsible for their learning are favoured. In addition, the words “tự học tập” and “tự nghiên cứu” [self-study] are common in these two documents. These varying interpretations may be one reason that has led to teachers’ different understandings of the term. It is argued by the current researcher that an agreed understanding of the term, learner autonomy, should be provided in policy documents which then support teacher understanding for the follow through in teaching practices. The researcher would also argue that this process should occur not only with the term learner autonomy itself but with other foreign-origin terms used in Vietnamese education to avoid confusion.

According to research (Benson, 1997; Oxford, 2003), there are four different perspectives of representing the construct of learner autonomy, which include: technical, psychological, political and the sociocultural perspectives. The technical perspective focuses on the physical situation, the psychological perspective focuses on the characteristics of learners, the sociocultural perspective focuses on mediated learning, and the political-critical perspective focuses on ideologies, access, and power structures. As discussed above, in Vietnamese the use of the word “tính” or “sự” along with “ability” or “capacity” or “responsibility” by the teachers may result in the emphasis placed on the characteristics or the behaviours of the learner. Identifying the specific perspective of Vietnamese language users through their word usage is paramount to understanding how they interpret the term, learner
autonomy. This confusion in identifying the term, learner autonomy, has been reported on in other research. For example, if the teachers had used the word “quyền” [right] and “chủ động của người học” [learner autonomy] they would be referring to students’ right to take control of their learning used in the political perspective of the term (Benson, 1997). Other important words are “negotiation” or “collaboration” which can be used to indicate the social perspective of the term. However, these words and phrases were not used by the four teachers in the study. The point here is that the single term, learner autonomy, in English can be interpreted in many different ways in Vietnamese. It can be argued that with no clear interpretation of the term, teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and its usefulness for student learning are influenced.

### 5.1.2 Teachers’ understanding of learner autonomy

While the majority of the teachers in Phase 1 of the research (86.2%) thought that they had some responsibility to foster learner autonomy, it was found in Phase 2 of the research that teachers did not see it as primarily their role to foster learner autonomy. As described above, there was a lack of understanding about the concept of learner autonomy and so it follows that there was little belief that it was a necessary component for students’ learning. For example, Ngan said that she had never thought about learner autonomy before, “Honestly, I have never thought about it [learner autonomy], but I will tell you something that I understand about it”. She then defined learner autonomy as a developmental process and learning “how to learn”. She further described that she held this understanding about learner autonomy because she had some experience with learning abroad where she found self-access learning systems wonderful with materials and facilities organised to facilitate learning and self-instruction in using these materials. What Ngan did not include in her description of learner autonomy was the role of the teacher, which is a key element in the current research’s definition of learner autonomy. According to the researcher’s working definition of learner autonomy for the current research, a main component of the construct is that students are able to work independently but in negotiation and with support from teachers. This element was missing from all four participants’ descriptions of learner autonomy. This indicates that the teachers might have different perspectives of learner autonomy from the researcher. Ngan suggested that doing some scaffolding and having resources for the students to learn on their own was important, indicating that teachers have a
responsibility in developing learner autonomy. What she might have also added was that she, as a teacher herself, should provide some direction on appropriate resources for learning (Cheng & Lin, 2010; Esch, 1997; Gardner & Miller, 2011; Morrison, 2008; Reinders, 2007; Sheerin, 1997; Sturtridge, 1997).

In contrast, the other participants in the research had not studied abroad before and they did not define learner autonomy in the same way as Ngan. For example, both Ha and Bich indicated in the interviews that the students could be autonomous thanks to the self-study hour that the faculty arranged for them each week. Ha said: “We have an hour for self-study every week.” Ha expressed that the notion of learner autonomy was synonymous with self-study and learning without a teacher, which allowed the students to take responsibility for their learning. The key element missing is teacher-student negotiation of learning or teacher support of students’ independent learning. According to Little (1991), one of the most common misunderstandings of learner autonomy is that learner autonomy is synonymous as independent learning or self-instruction -learning without teachers’ support. It may be that the research teachers did not see the important role of teachers in helping their students foster autonomy. It might be that the teachers’ educational background and experience in teaching may have some influence on their thinking and beliefs about this new term. It is interesting to note that all the four participants in the case study had done masters courses and yet did not understand the concept of learner autonomy nor how to help their students to develop it. Does this reveal a gap in TESOL or linguistics Master’s programs in Vietnam? Or is this due to the gap between research/theory to practice that researchers (Pipal, 1998; Westwood, 2008) have identified? Further research could explore this concern. With their teacher training and working experience in Vietnam, it is possible that the teachers’ limited knowledge of learner autonomy has come from the conventional teacher-dominated classroom approach to teaching and learning.

In the Vietnamese educational system, regarding the teacher-student relationship, the teacher is considered as the controller and knowledge provider in the class rather than the facilitator (Dang, 2010; Nguyen, 2010; Oliver, 2004; Phan, 2006). Additionally, schools are formed in a structure where the authority is not shared; individuality and creativity are not largely encouraged (Harman & Nguyen, 2009; Pham, 2009). As a result of this system, learners tend not to take responsibility for their own learning but rather rely on their teachers to provide them with the information and structure for learning. Because teachers in the
current research had not been trained in how to help students develop autonomy, they might have some doubt about the need for the development and implementation of learner autonomy in their classrooms. It may be that their educational background and teaching environment in Vietnamese schools resulted in teachers’ various ideas of the constraints hindering their adoption of developing and delivery of learner autonomy in their individual contexts.

The lack of a strong belief about learner autonomy as a supporting factor in student learning was reflected in the teaching practices of the participants in the current research. The following section discusses the alignment between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and their teaching practices to foster learner autonomy.

5.2 ALIGNMENT BETWEEN TEACHERS’ BELIEFS AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICES

5.2.1 Teachers’ role in promoting learner autonomy

In the working definition of learner autonomy in the current study the teacher is expected to actively involve the students in the learning goals and encourage them to take control over their learning. It emphasises the negotiation and collaboration between the teacher and the students in their classroom, including deciding the objectives of their learning, deciding the materials and content of learning, deciding the teaching methods and techniques; monitoring and evaluating the learning.

As discussed in Chapter 2, in order to be successful in fostering learner autonomy, teachers need to be aware of their role and responsibilities as they transition from information providers to facilitators of learning. This requires that teachers are willing to change and negotiate with their students at the syllabus-planning stage. To effect such a change, the learner themselves would be involved in the selection, modification and adaptation on both content and process. This involvement on the part of the learner can be encouraged by the use of subjective needs assessment instruments such as the needs assessment questionnaire (Nunan, 1996). In selecting learning experiences, in an autonomy-focused classroom, the teacher may introduce a range of learning activities and tasks. There would also be an attempt to identify the learning style preferences of the learner, and use these as the starting point in making pedagogical selections. In the autonomy-focused classroom, the learners are encouraged to reflect on their learning experiences and to evaluate the opportunities made
available to them in the class. In this way, they learn not only about the target language, but also about the learning process itself.

5.2.2 The degree of alignment between teachers’ beliefs and practices

The data from the current research showed that there was a clear alignment between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and their teaching behaviour. This study clearly indicated that teachers did not express a clear understanding of learner autonomy so did not believe it was an important facet of their teaching practice. This result is in line with the results of several researchers (e.g. Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Mansour, 2013; Zheng, 2013). For example, in the current research, Bich and Ha believed that learner autonomy was synonymous with self-study. As a consequence, in their practices they did not foster learner autonomy because, in their view, it was their students’ responsibility to foster their own learning out-of-class. They indicated that their job was to provide the students with self-study materials. Ngan suggested that the best approach to fostering learner autonomy in her context was to support the students with resources for self-study such as found in a self-access centre. However, she described that this solution must come from the university level, not on her own; therefore, she did not take on any responsibility for supporting her students in developing learner autonomy and did not make any attempt to pursue this mode of student learning. Moreover, all of the teachers in the second phase of the current research believed that learner autonomy is a developmental process and their current students were not at the developmental level of learner autonomy. Instead of fostering learner autonomy the teachers provided the students with basic knowledge to understand the lessons which they expressed may help students become autonomous later. The participants did not explain how this foundational knowledge would foster learner autonomy.

On the whole, it was found in the current research that teachers appeared to have little inclination to foster learner autonomy in their class or, indeed, had little awareness of how such a thing could occur. Results from Phase 2 of the current research showed that EFL teaching in the four observed classes in the four different universities in Vietnam was teacher-centred and institution-focused with little regard for learner autonomy. The following sections present a discussion about teachers’ perceptions of their teaching practices and the underlying reasons for their teaching choices.
5.2.3 Traditional teaching practices in Vietnam

Traditionally, learners in Vietnamese classrooms do not make decisions on what to learn because this is predetermined by the school curriculum and the teachers (Dang, 2010; Le, 2013; Nguyen, 2010). These top-down directives are a strong feature in Vietnamese education and have guided the pedagogy of the four participants in the case studies of the current research. Although one participant, Thu, had an opportunity to develop curriculum she did so by using a traditional approach to teaching and learning rather than incorporating learner autonomy into the curriculum. Being accustomed to abiding by such directives the participants may not have been confident enough to implement the development of learner autonomy in their classes even though the term is now included in new educational policy. Putting the term into policy but not following up with further information on what the term actually means or training on how to implement it in the classroom appears to be a significant factor in the current research. The participants may not have felt empowered to introduce this new concept in their pedagogy. This finding concurs with that of (Dardjowidjojo, 2001; Pham, 2005) who suggested that the traditional Eastern culture may influence teachers’ and students’ beliefs that they have certain roles and responsibility in the class. The research participants may think that they should follow the traditional way of teaching, and that does not include learner autonomy. This view may have resulted in less negotiation or collaboration between teachers and students that would have allowed for learner autonomy to be incorporated as part of the classroom pedagogy.

According to Little (1991), some teachers believe that autonomous learners make teachers redundant. Other teachers believe that teachers’ interventions can destroy learner autonomy (Little, 1991). Both these viewpoints - misconceptions were found in the current research where the teachers expressed concern about relinquishing their teaching responsibility in the class and justified this position by stating that they did not see developing learner autonomy as part of their responsibility. For example, Bich said: “Teachers should guide and orient their students. Sometimes, teachers don’t need to guide, the students can do, and this means they are autonomous. If teachers guide totally, it doesn’t mean autonomy.” Ha described learner autonomy as the “students’ ability and responsibility for studying on their own” without help from a teacher” When asked about the teacher’s role in fostering learner autonomy, Ha indicated in the initial interview that she believed
becoming autonomous learners was the students’ responsibility not the teacher’s: “I can’t always ask them to do this or that. It is impossible. It is not compulsory. It is optional. My viewpoint is to let student be responsible for their learning.” She said: “We have an hour for self-study every week.” In her expressed belief the notion of learner autonomy was synonymous with self-study and learning without a teacher, which allowed the students to take responsibility for their self-study. In the above examples, these teachers were describing learner autonomy as something students may or may not be able to do on their own through self-study. They placed little, if any, emphasis on their own role in helping students become more autonomous learners.

5.2.4 Perceived barriers to fostering learner autonomy

Another factor that appears to have contributed to the alignment between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and their teaching practices in the current research is the number of perceived barriers participants described that prevented them from incorporating learner autonomy in their pedagogy. In Phase 1 of the research Vietnamese teachers identified various constraining factors that could hinder the development and promotion of learner autonomy in Vietnamese contexts, including lack of resources, educational policies, curriculum, technology, teacher training, and examinations. Among them, approximately 91% of the surveyed teachers indicated that they needed teacher training to learn how to foster learner autonomy. Many of these barriers are consistent with the finding in Phase 2 of the research. For example, Thu believed that the major constraint for her in fostering learner autonomy was the teacher’s lack of understanding of learner autonomy. Thu suggested that, “it is important to have training courses to let the teachers understand why or the real reason they do this or that and how to do it better.” She emphasised that: “Sometimes, we understand something like this [learner autonomy], but how to apply or practice it is another issue”. She also indicated students’ motivation as the second biggest constraint in her teaching context. This observation places the responsibility of developing learner autonomy on the student; if students were more motivated they could become more autonomous in their learning, thus relieving the teacher of any responsibility. In addition to students’ lack of motivation to become autonomous learners, Ngan expressed that the constraint in her case was her lack of time for the class and the availability of resources for students to study on their own. She said she was too busy to spend more time creating activities to make her lessons different. These
comments are revealing in that Ngan recognised that the teacher does have a role to play in
developing learner autonomy. She, like Thu, however placed the burden of responsibility on
her students; if they were more motivated, they would become more autonomous.

Bich suggested that teachers cannot be the constraining factor. She suggested instead
that the assessment and testing system in her school limited her teaching into test-oriented
and textbook-based pedagogy and that learner autonomy cannot be developed in such
educational contexts. She also indicated students’ lack of proficiency in learning English and
the students’ Vietnamese cultural characteristics as other reasons for their inability to become
autonomous learners, again placing the burden on the students. Like the other three teachers
in the current research, Ha indicated that in her school, the syllabus for English was not well-
designed and her students’ lack of proficiency and motivation were the constraints, thus
relieving herself as the barrier for students developing learner autonomy. In Phase 1 of the
research, approximately 72% of the surveyed teachers indicated that learner autonomy can
only achieved by certain learners, which is a misconception about learner autonomy that
previous researchers have identified (Little, 1991). This misconception may relate to
teachers’ beliefs that only motivated students and English proficient students can become
autonomous. It is significant and disturbing that all the teachers in Phase 2 considered that
only learners who are proficient in English can become autonomous learners. “It would be a
mistake to try to correlate the initial, intermediary, and advanced stages of autonomy… with
the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of language proficiency” (Kumaravadivelu,
2003, p. 144). Moreover, there are different levels of autonomy which means that learners
with a low level of proficiency in language can become autonomous learners (Littlewood,
1999; Nunan, 1997). It is argued that the teachers may have this attitude because they lacked
understanding of learner autonomy or they might see it, at least partially, as an excuse for not
attempt to foster learner autonomy in their teaching contexts.

Ha, Ngan and Bich described that the syllabus is so powerful that it determines
everything that a teacher does in the classroom. All four teachers in the research mentioned
that the final-semester examinations were barriers to the development of learner autonomy
because the exams determined the content of learning. One might argue that while the
examinations might determine the content for learning, they do not necessarily determine the
process for learning. While all participants in the research said that there is specific content
that must be covered and certain things that must be taught in their classes, it appears that
learner autonomy was not prioritised as a particular pedagogy in their classes to achieve these results.

Although the data from the current research provided some evidence that teachers were reluctant to relinquish responsibility, the data also offered a glimpse of teachers’ potential to foster learner autonomy as per government directives if they had targeted supports, such as curriculum reform, a greater use of ICTs and training students to develop their skills and strategies to become autonomous learners. These findings are somewhat akin with the finding from Nakata (2011) which showed that many Japanese EFL teachers recognised constraints hindering learner autonomy in their contexts and would like to foster learner autonomy in their contexts but did not feel fully ready to foster autonomy in their learners. In the current research teachers expressed the belief that they could do something to foster learner autonomy in their contexts but they also had negative beliefs about their students’ abilities to become autonomous. The following section explores this finding in more detail.

5.2.5 Teachers’ view of their students’ abilities to become autonomous learners

While teachers had a well-defined view of their role and responsibility in their class this view did not include a positive attitude toward their students’ readiness to take responsibility for developing autonomous learning. Overall, the teachers in the research did not express positive beliefs that students in their class were ready to take control of their learning and as a consequence they expressed the belief that their current learners did not have any degree of autonomy. Learners, therefore, were seen as one of the constraints hindering the fostering of learner autonomy. In data in Phase 1 of the research approximately 72% teachers believed learner autonomy can only be achieved by certain learners. Data from Phase 2 of the research concurred with this finding with all four participants expressing the belief that learner autonomy cannot be achieved by all students. Teachers in Phase 2 referred to the lack of pupils’ motivation and interest in their class and students’ low level of English language proficiency as the reason for the current lack of learner autonomy in their class. In other words, the students are at fault for not becoming autonomous learners. For example, Ngan had clear expectations of how her current students could become autonomous:

They will become autonomous when they reach level three [semester three]…it means when they are getting familiar with their learning. Before that (level three), they are as
passive as when they were at high school. Thus, if we want them to be autonomous, we must wait until they reach level three.

(Initial Interview, Ngan)

Thu expressed similar thinking as Ngan’s about this point, indicating that: “when they learn in the second and then the third semester, they will have enough knowledge and experience of learning; they will be more motivated, so they will be more autonomous in their learning.” This comment revealed Thu’s belief that the more proficient at learning English the students were, the more potential they had to become autonomous learners. Bich expressed her view that confident language learners were more likely to develop autonomy than those who lacked confidence. She said: “If they [learners] are more confident, they will become more autonomous.” These findings suggest a need for further research in this area. If learner autonomy is now mandated pedagogy it is important that Vietnamese teachers both understand the construct and the process to foster learner autonomy to support student learning.

In the Vietnamese context, traditionally, students are often depicted as passive and dependent learners (Dang, 2010; Pham, 2005). Ngan’s comment that, “they are as passive as when they were at high school” suggests that she viewed students at university as still behaving as they had when they were at high school. She did not describe how she might scaffold university students out of this behaviour as a university lecturer. Bich also described her students as passive learners. She commented in the final interview that: “If I ask them to do, they will do. If not, they won’t”. According to her, the current students were not only passive but lazy so they just followed what she told them to do. Ha had the same comments about her students, she said: “students are very passive, they just learn what we teach them, no more” and, “they just learn to pass the exams”. This passiveness may be the result of cultural impact. However, in his Vietnamese study, Howe (1993) suggested that whether students were passive or active depends on the teacher’s expectations and the cultural influence. Such a view of students could mean that Vietnamese teachers are less motivated and less ready to develop learner autonomy in their tertiary classroom because they do not have the expectation that students will put in the effort to become autonomous.

None of the teachers in the current research reported that they asked students to make some decisions typically associated with the autonomous learning such as selecting materials or activities. The common reason for this is that the teachers were not comfortable to hand
over the control to their students. For example, Bich commented in a stimulated recall interview that “I didn’t let my students prepare the activities because they couldn’t do as I expected them to do and, as a result, we wouldn’t meet the objectives of the lesson. Also, it would take more time”. As researchers (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1992) pointed out, the teacher-student relationship in which teachers are considered mentors and masters of knowledge in the classroom is common in Vietnam. Teachers are considered to be all-knowing “fountain of knowledge” (Littlewood, 1999, p. 74) and a moral model (Phan, 2004) in the teaching-learning process. In contrast, as reported in the current research there are cases when the teachers know that it would be better to involve their students in the learning process, but are not confident enough or creative enough to make any alternations or changes. Vietnamese teachers, especially those who have been abroad, may have learnt interesting things about learner-centred approaches and may want to engage learners in the learning process. For example, Ngan believed that it would be better to give her current students some control over their learning but she still found implementing these ideas challenging with her current students. Ngan commented that:

To be honest, we want to be student-centred, let students decide the objectives and select the materials. Step by step [we should] enable the students to be responsible and willing to learn...they [autonomous learners] have good attitudes towards learning…and they will learn more productively.

(Initial interview, Ngan)

However, Ngan did not follow through with these ideas in her pedagogy. Similarly, Thu, who had some training on new approaches to teaching believed that her current students would not become autonomous until they reach higher levels of learning. Thu indicated that she believed that students had the capacity to learn independently because, “students now are more open and have different sources of information and learning. They are more autonomous than the previous generation” and suggested that structures such as tutorials and projects as well as class discussions “could help enhance autonomous learning”. She expressed that the students should “work together so they are more responsible for their own learning and they can express their ideas and voices” and the lesson “will be more interesting” for them. This belief came from her experience of working at H University as she pointed out “At this university, I find the learning situations interesting and useful for the students because the students here have to do a lot of projects in their study.” Thu expressed
that through these activities, students’ motivation and their interest for learning would be improved; therefore, learner autonomy could be fostered. However, the real issue of fostering learner autonomy in practice was not that simple for Thu. While she provided some understanding of the term, she found it difficult to implement learner autonomy in her class. The current study showed that there is a conflict between what teachers want to do and what they can do, or feel they can do, which concurs with Pham’s (2005) study.

It could be that teachers in the current research felt obliged to work within the curriculum framework which required them to work at a certain pace and with certain materials, with little scope for including such things as fostering learner autonomy. There was also the concern that students might see decision-making as the teacher’s job. This may be due to the cultural impact where students value the teachers as the absolute authority (Ho & Crookall, 1995). What the teacher says and does is always correct and is perceived by students as “model” behaviour (Phan, 2004). The teachers, themselves, indicated that making these choices was regarded as more time-saving and the most effective for student learning since students might not have the knowledge or the expertise in making the right decisions that will support their learning. Ha described that she did not ask her students to select the learning materials because of her prior teaching experience with the class. In the stimulated recall interview, she said:

I used to ask my students to do that, but I didn’t succeed. The students prepared nothing. I mean students are very passive, they just learn what we teach them, no more. You see, the previous lesson, I taught them but they immediately forgot all. If I taught differently I am sure they will understand nothing.  

(SRI, Ha)

Perhaps, teachers in the current research found it ineffective and undesirable to pass onto the student these responsibilities. None of the participants described a process of negotiating learning with their students.

5.3 THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS ON LEARNER AUTONOMY

Understanding the associations between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and their behaviours in the class in the current research was done through the model of triadic reciprocity’ (Bandura, 1986). As described in the literature review, triadic reciprocity
explores the relationships between teachers’ beliefs and their actual teaching behaviours and the translation of teachers’ beliefs into their actual teaching practice in an educational context. This model indicates the mutual connection among these three factors: beliefs, behaviours and environment. In Vietnam, the institutional ideology or culture, which is examination-oriented and textbook-centred, framed the broad perceptions of teachers’ individual thinking about fostering learner autonomy in their own classroom. As discussed earlier, these factors in part have resulted in teachers not utilising teaching practices which foster learner autonomy, instead teaching practices were institution-focused. In the following section, the association between teachers’ beliefs and practices within the EFL higher education environment will be discussed.

5.3.1 Learning autonomy in the EFL teaching context

In the curriculum and syllabus in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in Vietnam, learner autonomy is not a focus. There is a focus on only the content to be covered, which is primarily related to learning English grammar functions. This focus on content may make the teachers think that learner autonomy is something outside their classroom or at least not on the list of their teaching requirements. As reported by Pham (2005), teachers have to prepare for students’ examinations; they have to finish certain content in the textbook in a certain amount of time, they may have big classes of 50 students (like Ha’s class), so they may feel the need to maintain a rigid focus for teaching that incorporates learner autonomy. Hayden and Lam (2009) suggested that the staff/student ratio in Vietnam has an impact on the focus of teachers’ pedagogy. Teachers in the current research expressed that their students are more concerned about the immediate goal - to pass exams, and to get a degree rather than engage in a long term, more abstract goal - to develop autonomous learning skills and strategies. As Ha said in a stimulated recall interview:

I target the examinations. I had to base [my lessons] on the exam structures and content of the test. In particular, I focused on teaching grammar and expressions because my students will have tests on these grammar rules. I had too little time; therefore, I had to work at full capacity to provide the students with all the required knowledge and information for their coming exams.

(SRI, Ha)
Again, this may be that students are considered to be in class only to receive lessons on English language learning rather than constructing ways to take ownership of language learning. In second language learning classes language output is expected to be error-free, and memorisation is valued and the teacher is at the centre of the process (Lewis & McCook, 2002). According to Pham (2006), students’ adherence to memorisation learning cannot be avoided in Vietnam because it is employed in many other disciplines at the university level. The preference for rote learning has been noted by other authors (see Dang, 2010; Pham, 2009; Harman & Nguyen, 2009). The traditional teacher-centred pedagogy where the role of the teacher is explaining and providing knowledge to students is paramount (Pham, 2009).

Even for Thu, her faculty gave her professional training on teaching methods with one minor part related to learner autonomy but she did not implement the construct in her teaching practice because the traditional methods appears to have taken predominance, so no room for learner autonomy in her pedagogy. In a stimulated recall interview, she said that:

> Honestly, I am responsible for all the activities in my class. I have never thought about what you have just told me (letting students be responsible for their learning). I just thought that after finishing the theory on Pie chart, I needed to give them exercises [on this concept] to practice.

(SRI, Thu)

Thu’s decision not to include fostering learner autonomy may have been due to the fact that she had no proper training about it. Nor does it appear that she had support to implement learner autonomy in her teaching practice. Instead she defaulted to her already known teaching approach, which was a traditional teacher-centred pedagogy rather than trying to tackle the new, but ill-defined construct of learner autonomy.

While it was apparent that, on the whole, the Vietnamese teachers in the current research had limited knowledge of learner autonomy, it was also apparent that these teachers felt more comfortable using tried-and-true teaching approaches rather than exploring the implementation of a new approach. More research in this area would help to better understand where and how learner autonomy sits comfortably in the new changes in teaching and learning suggested in the new policy documents. The following sections describe some of the traditional teaching methods used by teachers in the research.
5.3.2 Traditional classroom arrangement

The current study revealed that the teachers’ actual teaching practices may have resulted, in part, from the physical arrangement of the classroom. Observations from Phase 2 of the research indicated that the traditional straight-row arrangement was predominant in all the four classes. The students’ seating in all the observed lessons was organised in this same arrangement in all four classes, even in those classrooms equipped with modern furniture (see Figure 3.1 for the illustration of this observation). For example, in Thu’s class, there were small individual tables and attached chairs for each person. It would have been possible for the teacher to arrange the class differently, for example, arranging the tables in small groups or arranging them differently, such as in a U-shaped or O-shaped arrangement for better class interactions, but it appears that she did not attempt to do so. Instead, she had the students arrange the tables and chairs in the traditional way with four or five small tables making a long row of tables in all the three observed lessons. Similarly, Ngan’s class was arranged in the traditional way with “rows of desks and chairs facing a chalkboard with a teacher’s desk nearby” (Field notes, Observed lesson 1, Ngan, April) although it also had small individual tables and chairs. While these two teachers may be aware of the possible impact of student seating on their teaching and their students’ learning they appeared to be reluctant to release full control of their classroom that they held by using the traditional seating arrangement. For example, Thu said: “It is really difficult to conduct the activity like this in this big class. I taught the same lesson in the other class as well but it is easier to control the class…I would let my students write on big sheet of paper and correct their mistakes if I had more time and in a small class. It is quite difficult to manage the class like this”. It might be suggested that perhaps these teachers lacked the confidence to allow their students more autonomy in the class and so adhered to the traditional seating arrangement where they, the teachers, held control.

Bich’s and Ha’s classes were typical traditional classes with long tables and benches in rows facing the blackboard. These teachers may have had a lack of awareness of the importance or the influence of the physical arrangement on learning and teaching, or they may have seen this kind of seating as a feature of the class that was beyond their control. For example, as Bich commented on the approach to fostering learner autonomy in her context, “it would be possible if the class is like a “club” with some supported facility in which the students can role-play or make presentations in their groups easily”. In her opinion, the
The current classroom was not proper for scaffolding to facilitate such learning. The current researcher would suggest that the physical arrangement of the classroom can impact on classroom interactions and, thus, the development of learner autonomy. As suggested in the literature, the dominance of the traditional classroom arrangement “minimizes student-student interaction focus and places the primary interaction focus in the classroom on the teacher” (McCorskey & McVetta, 1978, p. 103). The researcher argues that the physical arrangement may have inhibited more learner centred practices in the observed classes. There is a need for more research to be undertaken to determine the impact of classroom dynamics in fostering learner autonomy. Such classroom features are important to note as they may provide a barrier to fostering learner autonomy in classrooms.

5.3.3 Test-oriented teaching/ Textbook-based teaching

The current study found that teachers approaches “product-oriented teaching” rather than “process-oriented teaching”. That is, teachers placed their full attention on test and examination results rather than focusing on fostering students’ abilities to take control of their own learning. It was observed that, in the four classes, the teachers and students did not share or negotiate learning of the lessons. The teaching objectives and content in the observed lessons were considerably influenced by the instructional materials. Dang (2010) had similar findings that “Being strongly considered part of the Eastern culture, the popular philosophy of educational practices in Vietnam is more associated with absorbing and memorizing than experimenting and producing knowledge” (p. 5). Three out of four teachers in Phase 2 of the current research followed the textbook strictly. They also organised lesson activities according to the textbook. The other case, Thu, was flexible in designing the course and activities but she used prescribed content which was aligned closely to the tests and exams. The reason participants gave for this behaviour was that the students would fail to obtain the program objectives and fail in their exams if they deviated from their current teaching practices. This is evidenced by what Thu said in the final interview:

Everything is test-oriented. All lessons must be very practical, understandable. In addition, the lessons must be more difficult than the real test…but there must be enough for the students to learn, not too much because they have so many other things to learn. So, I have to give them enough proper tasks, not to let them to learn and construct themselves.
Thus, the teachers taught test-oriented content in a traditional teacher-centred way to prepare the students for the coming exams/assessment/test. They organised materials to meet the objectives of the lesson, not meet the interest or learning needs of the students outside of exam preparation. It should not be assumed that learner autonomy and exam preparation are mutually exclusive. It would be interesting to understand how these two goals can be combined to benefit student learning.

Almost all of school operational practices, including both managerial and academic activities remain centrally managed and controlled by Moet (Moet, 2005). A curriculum framework prescribes for each program the necessary objectives, minimum knowledge requirement, structured curriculum components and necessary allocations of time to theory, practice and internship experience (Hayden & Lam, 2009). Summative assessment is the main type of class assessment in Vietnam (Hayden & Lam, 2009; Trinh, 2005). This type of assessment is defined by McKay (2006) as teachers collecting information on students at the end of a period of time, and teachers reporting this information to others about students’ progress. The results of the tests are the only information that teachers are asked to provide the stakeholders at the end of each semester (Dang, 2010; Harman & Nguyen, 2009; Trinh, 2005). In Vietnam, teachers are assessed in terms of their learners’ academic success measured by learners’ performance in the exams, thus, learners’ examinations scores are indicators of teachers’ teaching quality (Pham, 2006). Understandably, teachers have to teach to promote students’ success in examinations. These external pressures have had a considerable influence on the teachers’ teaching approach. For this reason, success in tests is the supreme aim of every student and teacher and the objective as quoted in the course books will soon be abandoned to give way to teach and test content (Pham, 2006). In the survey of teachers in Vietnam, Pham (2008) found that many teachers did not want to change totally from their traditional method in teaching English grammar to a more communicative method. It is suggested that from the results in the current research that, in order to foster learner autonomy, the curriculum needs to focus on assisting students to develop skills and capacities beyond those required only for narrow academic pursuits such as grammar drills and exam preparation. Instead, curriculum needs to enable students to take control of their learning in order to develop broader knowledge and their interest in lifelong learning (Dang, 2010; Harman & Nguyen, 2009). Assessment needs to be for learning and not only of learning.
which may lead to more student-centred classroom teaching practices that include fostering the development of learner autonomy.

There is little research about the needs of the learners for the development of teaching curriculum (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999). This lack of autonomy still exists with the universities where they have taken on more responsibility in their programs. For example, Ngan and Thu’s universities have adopted more control of their programs. From the data it appears that the components of these programs have been decided upon with special reference to the specific ability of the teacher and the availability of teaching materials as well as on the skills that have been perceived as necessary for their students’ future exams or career. Thus, the current researcher would suggest that it is necessary to change the way the higher education system is managed in this area in Vietnam. Universities need to be provided with more responsibility in responding to student demand, managing their own resources and planning for their own development.

An important feature to note about teaching English in Vietnam is that the textbooks are not written in Vietnam and the content is not local to Vietnamese situations. However, it was found in the current research that teachers’ attitudes towards imported materials (textbooks) are largely positive and the activities and tasks in these materials are followed closely. As noted in previous research, many teachers and students believed that these materials are ideal for all the students and teachers, and for all situations to learn English in Vietnam (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999). The teachers in the current research also believed that everything in the book is “good”. For example, according to Ngan, “the reading and writing syllabus and course books for this semester are good” and so there was no need for her to introduce new work, relevant to the local context in Vietnam and, therefore, more relevant to her students. In Ha and Bich’s cases, a vague evaluation of the proficiency level of students, for example the level of proficiency at the pre-intermediate level was made based on their status (first/second year) as a student rather than actually testing their level of language proficiency. Then, ‘good’ books, “available on the local market were selected” (p. 2) for the pre-intermediate level and all or almost all of the content of the book became the core components of the course (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999). There appeared to be no questioning that the materials used were not contextualised for Vietnamese learning. Although not part of the current research, the materials used for teaching English, having little relevance for Vietnamese students may have contributed to their lack of motivation in class which then
may have contributed to their lack of developing learner autonomy. More research is needed in this area to determine the relationships of these variables.

Another serious problem identified in the research which concurs with previous studies (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999; Trinh, 2005) is that there is a lack of course evaluations and subsequent changes in programming in the development and implementation of English language courses in Vietnam. Pham (2009) pointed out that one of the weakness in Vietnam’s higher education institutions belong to curricula which “do not meet needs of society - they are too ‘academic’ and curricula do not pay enough attention to ‘social and humanity aspects’” (p. 8). Historically, “courses are usually designed once, materials are usually selected and developed once, and methodologies are usually chosen once” (Brogan & Nguyen, 1999, p. 2). According to Brogan and Nguyen (1999), components for teaching and learning are supposed to, and even are believed to, work well with all students and teachers for all situations. In the current research, Ngan and her students followed the content of the course book strictly with Ngan guiding her students to do all the exercises and activities without deviation as well as the sequence of each lesson as they were written in the course book. She justified this approach to teaching and learning as follows:

To be honest, recently, I am too busy to invest more in my teaching as I expected. But it is due to the students. I think it will be better to stick to the course book to teach...because right at the beginning, if the students don’t understand the basic terms and concepts, it will be difficult for them later. Later, when they have enough input, they will know how to do it on their own.

(SRI, Ngan)

It appears that it is easier to keep doing what teachers have always been doing rather than trying to implement a new approach to teaching and learning. For example, Ha said:

It is necessary to change the syllabus. The students will work harder and be more motivated to learn because they will have more time for English. At present, students learn English just one day a week, they forget very quickly. Sometimes, I check their homework and check previous lessons, they can’t remember anything about the lesson they learned the day before.

(Final interview, Ha)

The teachers in the current research expressed that their current teaching practices have a number of problems however they did not want to deviate from their habitual teaching
practices to overcome these problems. The teacher may know that a material, or an activity, or a task that comes from a published book is not appropriate for students, but appears that the teachers in the current researcher were not confident enough or creative enough to make any alternations or changes, or to abandon the activity altogether. Pham (2009) stated that one of the serious problems in education is that due to heavy teaching workloads, teachers have little time for preparing lectures and updating materials. As Ngan mentioned, she did not have much time for her preparation and her teaching and this point was echoed by the other teachers in the research.

Apart from the lack of time, the thing that the teachers expressed that hindered fostering learner autonomy in their teaching was their lack of confidence to do so. The teachers in the current research indicated that they felt that they did not have supportive working environments. Benson (2009) stated that in any given learning context, there are undoubtedly constraints on the development of learner autonomy, however, this does not mean that learner autonomy cannot be fostered. These perceived barriers show teachers’ less positive attitudes toward and confidence in their abilities to foster learner autonomy in their contexts. Teachers’ beliefs are important components of their practices (Borg, 2001). Learner autonomy in Vietnam cannot be fully encouraged without the relevant and knowledgeable support from the teacher, but teachers also need support from their administrative staff to fully implement policy documents. It is suggested by the researcher that if teachers had more confidence, they would have put more effort and persistence in specific teaching tasks and engages in activities that support autonomous learning.

What can be inferred from this perceived lack of confidence is that the teachers in the current research may have low self-efficacy in their ability to foster learner autonomy. According to Bandura (1986), teacher efficacy describes the level of confidence a teacher has in their ability to teach. The teachers in the current research expressed the belief that they could not do something outside their regular teaching practices to foster learner autonomy, which may indicate low efficacy in relation to fostering learner autonomy. As Bich said that “It is impossible to foster learner autonomy in the Vietnamese contexts”. In this comment, Bich blames the Vietnamese context for the lack of development in learner autonomy rather than her own teaching beliefs or methods. All of the teachers expressed that they believed that they could not do anything to foster learner autonomy with their current students and that this teaching and learning approach was somehow symptomatic of education in Vietnam. All
appears to be either afraid of taking risks to change their teaching or are not interested in making those changes. They expressed concern that their students may miss the objectives of the lessons or may fail the coming exams if they allowed the students to work differently and their sole responsibility was to ensure that students were prepared for the exams.

### 5.3.4 Teaching experience

In the current research it appeared that teachers’ prior teaching experiences were influential on their present teaching practices. This is also pointed out in previous study (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999) that teaching experience has been linked to teachers’ flexibility and confidence, which influence classroom practice. The current study found that from these experiences, the participants described how they developed a system of pedagogy of their own. For example, Ha said:

According to my teaching experience, my students can’t learn that way [pick up new words themselves and learn]. Some of the lazy students even ignore new words. Thus, I’d better teach them directly…I planned the lessons carefully with suitable activities so that even the worst students in the class could understand and use the tense, the structures and do exercises. I did not focus only on the good students. I had to do it again and again and again so they can memorise the lesson in class. You must know that my students are all beginners [of English]; they can’t study on their own.

(SRI, Ha)

Instruction and organisation in the classroom were built on a combination of the teachers’ personal teaching experience, the required syllabus and the exams. In many cases, when they talked about their practices, especially the rationales for their behaviours, the participants all referred to these three elements. For example, in explaining her behaviour Thu suggested that she had never thought about giving students any responsibilities for their learning so provided no opportunities for fostering learner autonomy in her class. In a stimulated recall interview, she said that:

Honestly, I am responsible for all the activities in my class…I just thought that after finishing the theory on Pie chart, I needed to give them exercises to practice…I thought that for the writing task, the students needed only 20 minutes to write. There are about 10 sentences for each writing task. So on average, they have only two
In the above statement it appears that Thu’s focus was not on encouraging students to become autonomous learners. Rather, the focus was on a quantitative writing task with the hope of students completing 10 sentences in 20 minutes; indeed, there does not appear to be a consideration of the quality of the sentences written; instead the emphasis was on the number of sentences to be completed within a given time limit.

An important key to the influence of their past teaching experiences was the participants’ roles of monitoring and delivering direct instructions for each activity to the whole class. Observations done in each of the four classes revealed a similarity in teaching patterns in that all four teachers taught in a prescribed way, following the procedures described in the textbook. Students were not allowed to make choices to reflect their interests or learning styles. Bich explained that while the syllabus dictated the content to be covered within a given term, the teacher’s decisions were guided by this timeframe. Thus, she and the students had no choice other than following all the activities and exercises in the textbook.

All the objectives of the lessons are pre-decided by the syllabus. I must follow the syllabus...we chose this book as the course book because of its strengths to improve the all four skills in learning English. Secondly, when teachers design tests, they have to base on this book. So I decided to focus my teaching in all the content of the course book. Also, it depends on students’ English competence. Teachers can decide to improve or change the activities.

This teacher control of content and delivery of content takes away students’ responsibility for learning, making students dependent on the teachers. Students’ dependence was also supported by teachers’ prepared materials or course book and little use of technology during the lessons although in two of the classes, technology was available. For example, in all three observed lessons, Ha used a PowerPoint (PPT) to lecture. However, Ha described that she used PPT just to help her save some energy from writing on the board and having to explain the learning points which she assumed would help her student memorize the lesson more easily. Ha said:

I thought applying ICT helped me save energy. The lessons would be more interesting
and easy for students to understand. Visual aids help students remember easily. I don’t have to write much on the board which saves a lot of time. I also don’t have to explain much. I can use English to give the lecture. If I hadn’t used slides [in English], I would have presented in Vietnamese so the students could understand.

(SRI, Ha)

It appeared that the teachers in the research relied on their established teaching habits with little interest to utilise new routines or procedures to foster learner autonomy. It is difficult to see how learner autonomy can be developed through this kind of pedagogy.

5.3.5 Working conditions for teachers

Another result of the current research remarked upon by participants in Phase 2 was the working conditions for teachers in Vietnam. Salaries are low for teachers so they often take on additional teaching jobs or take on their own private business, which in turn may provide them with less time to engage in quality improvement in their teaching (Altbach, 2006; Brogan & Nguyen, 1999). For example, Ngan described her situation by saying, “To be honest, recently, I am too busy to invest more in my teaching as I expected” (Ngan, SRI). Ngan also explained that she had some more private classes to teach at another university in the afternoon and she was too busy with her housework and taking care of her grand-children. Competition for employment may also be a factor in creating a problem where teachers are reluctant in the sharing of ideas, experiences and materials. From the researcher’s own experience this is not common among teachers of English in Vietnam. This practice can be seen to align with Aoki’s (2008) notion of sacred and secret stories. It may be difficult to break down these barriers but the current researcher would suggest that it is not impossible. Implementing practices such as having a teaching forum for sharing ideas and practices may be one way to move out of the strict teacher-centred approach adopted by most teachers.

The challenge in Vietnam today is that teachers need to adapt their teaching into more learner-centred approaches for learner autonomy to occur (Hayden & Lam, 2009). For example, all four teachers in Phase 2 of the research mentioned that communicative teaching approaches rather than rote learning approaches were what they need to implement in their teaching to improve learning for their students. Decontextualised lessons and grammar drills are not sufficient to assist learners to become proficient English language users (Pham, 2006). However, it was found in the current research that teachers of English seem to have accepted
the grammar-translation method as it was still predominantly used by all four teachers in the research.

5.3.6 The influence of social-cultural factors on the relationship between beliefs and practices

It was found in the current research that the educational environment had an impact on teachers’ beliefs. A number of studies argue that teachers’ beliefs and practices cannot be examined out of context (Fang, 1996; Mansour, 2013; Pajares, 1992) and it would appear that the cultural and traditional teaching constraints in Vietnamese education were powerful influences on teachers’ beliefs and their behaviour in fostering learner autonomy in the current research. Thu described that she had been greatly influenced by her own teachers and her educational background where she was trained in the traditional way. Thu said in the final interview that:

First, our generation of teachers learnt out-of-dated knowledge so we are affected seriously. My previous lecturers had no knowledge or understanding about learner autonomy. This is a new recent term in Vietnam. Recently, people have focused on this. I am a teacher. I myself have great influence from the previous generation of teachers. Sometimes, we understand something like this, but how to apply or practice it is another issue. Second, when I was a university student, I didn’t learn about learner autonomy. When I did my master course, learner autonomy was just mentioned slightly in the methodology subject. And we know the thing is one thing, but apply it is another thing, totally different. I want learner autonomy to become separate lessons, something reliable for the teachers to have training on this. I need to learn about it, about new things.”

(Thu, Final interview)

Thu mentioned that she had been trained in a traditional teaching-learning environment. As a learner, she believed that the teachers’ role was as the authority in the class, providing students with everything related to the lesson, and so it is not surprising that she has adopted this approach in her own teaching practices.

However, Bich and Ha described things differently. It was interesting to note that when talking about their current students these two teachers mentioned that when they were students at university, they were more autonomous. For example, Ha said “when I was at university, I found that I was weak at translating skill, I had to go to extra class to learn”. In
this Ha indicated that she was responsible for her learning and that, as a student, she was a more autonomous learner than her current students. In her description, though, Ha takes on sole responsibility for her learning. She does not mention being supported or scaffolded to become autonomous in her learning. Ngan also described that when she had been studying abroad, she was an autonomous learner. However, perhaps due to the influence of the traditional teaching in Vietnam and lack of professional development, she defaulted back into the same traditional style as other teachers in the research who had never had any chances to study abroad.

It was argued in the current research that the top-down curriculum, classroom arrangement and textbook-based learning all had an impact on teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and about their learners’ capabilities to become autonomous learners. These factors are all related to the teaching/learning environment. From the data collected in the current research it would appear that the educational environment in Vietnam appears to be not supportive to learner autonomy development. The curriculum and textbooks are designed for language development to meet the objectives of the examinations, without any focus on learner autonomy. Teachers’ salary and time is not enough for them to devote whole-heartedly to their careers; it is easier to simply do what they have always done. In such an environment, there is no doubt that the teachers’ beliefs and knowledge about learner autonomy is limited and these limitations follow through in their adoption of a traditional teacher-centred pedagogy. The data from the current research demonstrated that teachers were not given opportunities for professional training in relation to learner autonomy. For example, in Thu’s case, when her faculty specified the policy by asking the teachers to have students do projects and to organise more group work among the students, she followed these directives without knowing the actual nature of the requirements. As Thu emphasised that: “Sometimes, we understand something like this [learner autonomy], but how to apply or practice it is another issue”. She also added that:

If the teachers have strong beliefs in learner autonomy, they are able to achieve it. There are some teachers who may know about learner autonomy but they don’t have the beliefs or have not very strong beliefs, they can only achieve it at very low level. Also, it depends on teachers because each teacher had different abilities to do it.

(Final interview, Thu)
The current researcher suggests that the one cause for the systematic and various problems in Vietnamese education may be the general Vietnamese philosophy of education. Vietnamese educators and teachers may hold the belief that teaching means providing knowledge and the skills for learning instead of fostering the construction of knowledge through innovative interactions between teachers and students. What appears to be needed is professional training on perspectives of teaching and learning in general and learner autonomy in particular. In other words, teachers need to be aware of the nature of their teaching and learning so they can enact effective teaching practices.

Evidence of the impact of triadic reciprocality (Bandura, 1986) can be seen clearly in Thu and Ngan who had different educational backgrounds and students at different levels of proficiency but both taught without regard to fostering learner autonomy so that students could advance their learning at their own pace. For example, their classes were equipped with flexible tables and chairs but the teachers did not organise their classes differently in order to incorporate strategies to foster learner autonomy. Thu and Ngan were able to describe some awareness of learner autonomy but they taught in the same way as Ha and Bich, who had little understanding of the construct. Ngan had studied in Western countries in her education and had come across the concept of learner autonomy. Thu had a professional training workshop with a small part related to learner autonomy, but neither of them tried to foster learner autonomy in their classes. Perhaps, the formal training that was provided to them was not sufficient in helping participants grasp a deep understanding of learner autonomy as prior knowledge about it seemed to exert very little influence on teachers’ beliefs and practices. In contrast, Bich and Ha had no experience or professional training on learner autonomy, thus, they lacked understanding about the construct. All four participants indicated that their teaching derived from their experience which had been seriously influenced by the environmental factors such as students, examinations, textbooks. They suggested that they needed targeted support, especially teacher training to foster learner autonomy. It is important to note that these four teachers did not have any opportunity for their continued formal learning related to learner autonomy; where training was provided it appears to have been a once only option.

The data in the current study indicated that teachers’ beliefs and practices failed in fostering learner autonomy in their contexts even when the policy is mandated by the government and their educational institutions. What can be inferred from this is that from the
policy to teachers’ practice there exists a big gap. The researcher would suggest that it is important for each university in Vietnam to recognise this point and, thus, provide professional development for their staff, especially on learner autonomy. This disconnection between policy and practice may be due to the teachers’ lack of awareness of policy or that policy is generally ignored or given low priority. For example, Bich and Ha acknowledged that they knew that there was that policy but did not inquire further on what the policy meant or how to implement it into their teaching practices. In contrast, Ngan took the advantage of the policy in a different way when she said: “According to the accreditation policy, students must spend at least two hours at home for preparation for each class hour” (Final interview, Ngan). Ngan used the policy as her strategy to manage time for teaching writing skills curriculum for her students and placed the responsibility of independent learning on their students. From the current research it can be suggested that English language teaching reforms in general and fostering learner autonomy in particular will remain unchanged until teachers are fully prepared to make changes and this can only happen when they are made more aware of what they are expected to do and how they are expected to do it.

The current research found the teachers themselves as an obstacle to foster learner autonomy. The researcher would argue that possibilities for developing autonomy within these constraints depend largely on teachers’ willingness and capacity to negotiate and support their students to take control of their learning. In particular, transitioning thinking and practices to a more communicative teaching approach is one way to promote learner autonomy as it moves both teachers and students away from the traditional tied-to-the-textbook approach. However, the process of negotiation and support for engaging learner autonomy should be pursued when teachers have an appropriate understanding of the construct and then scaffold the students in how to take control of their learning.

5.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the finding of the current research. This chapter was organised to address the three sub-research questions:

1. What are Vietnamese EFL teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy?
2. What are the teachers’ actual teaching practices regarding learner autonomy?
3. What is the association between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and teachers’ actual teaching practice?
It is argued in this thesis that the EFL teachers in Vietnamese educational contexts lacked understanding of the concept of learner autonomy. Their confusion of the construct may have resulted from the complexity of the term itself as a linguistic issue where learner autonomy is translated into the Vietnamese language in various ways. The traditional relationship between teacher and students in the Vietnamese traditional classroom where teacher is depicted to have high authority in the class as well as the lack of professional training in developing this Western-origin construct in the local educational contexts have also been described as a significant factor in the lack of learner autonomy in these teaching contexts. As the traditional classroom arrangement still dominates in the teaching contexts of Vietnam it may be hard for the teacher to initiate some innovative changes in their classroom. Additionally, the focus on testing/examination and teachers’ personal teaching experiences have a great impact on the teaching and learning processes and, in the current research, these factors did not allow for the fostering of learner autonomy.

Overall, it is found that there is an alignment between teachers’ beliefs and their actual behaviour regarding learner autonomy. Although the four teachers in the research had different working conditions and educational backgrounds, they lacked an overall understanding of learner autonomy. As a consequence, they did not make any attempts to foster learner autonomy in their contexts. The findings and discussion in this chapter suggest, however, that there are a number of issues related to learner autonomy that can be expanded on and further explored. These are covered in the next chapter, the conclusion and the implications of the current study.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

The previous chapter presents the discussions of the findings of the study. This chapter begins by discussing the contributions this study has made to the field of learner autonomy (Section 6.1). It then presents the limitations of the study (Section 6.2). Finally, it draws some conclusions and suggestions for further research in the field (Section 6.3).

6.1 CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

In the current study, learner autonomy is defined as learner’s willingness and ability to take responsibility to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate his/her learning in tasks that are constructed in negotiation with and support from the teacher. This definition contains two essential components: learners’ responsibility for their learning and teachers’ responsibility in supporting learners’ to develop autonomy in their learning. These two elements together have not been explored in the research before. This definition is useful for the teachers and educators in acknowledging their roles because, as Benson (2007) suggested, for research that is aimed at exploring learner autonomy, we need to know what it is that we are trying to foster. That is, we need to know not only teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy but also how those beliefs are put into teaching practice. The current research has provided a framework for future research in this area.

The current research indicated that teachers’ actual teaching practices were primarily traditional, teacher-centred teaching with no inclusion of learner autonomy. It was found that teachers did not foster learner autonomy in their class partly due to their lack of understanding about learner autonomy and partly due to the very powerful impact of the traditional teaching environment on them. The researcher would suggest that this finding depicts the current situation of learner autonomy in a traditional Eastern country. These findings would suggest that learner autonomy cannot be fostered without taking into consideration the influence of the local and contextual environment. Understanding the concept of learner autonomy, understanding the importance of fostering learner autonomy for student learning and understanding ways to foster learner autonomy in particular teaching contexts must become a focus if teachers are going to adhere to the new government policies directing that learner autonomy be part of the teaching-learning process.
The results of the current research indicate that although learner autonomy has been discussed in the literature over the past four decades in Vietnam, teachers’ access to this literature has been limited, which has resulted in their lack of understanding about the construct. The current research has made an important contribution to the field because it has identified the beliefs that Vietnamese teachers hold in relation to learner autonomy. The research findings revealed that those teachers who had some experience learning aboard and had some training about this new approach to learning were able to talk about learner autonomy based on their understanding or knowledge gained previously but did not have confidence in their abilities to follow through putting learning autonomy into action in their classes. It is one thing to talk about a concept but quite another thing to put that concept into practice.

In response to the current research question: *What is the association between teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and teachers’ behaviours in teaching English as a foreign language at universities in Vietnam*, the current study found that the teachers’ beliefs and their actual teaching practices were aligned. The alignment was clearly evidenced with the teachers’ lack of understanding about learner autonomy and their subsequent teaching practices where they did not foster learner autonomy. It was found that teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy were largely influenced by their prior teaching experience. The study also indicated that teachers used their beliefs and experiences to support their teaching practices and these together provided reasons not to foster learner autonomy. More research into this area would help to identify how beliefs are manifest in teaching practices.

A significant contribution of the current research is in highlighting that in the Vietnamese context learner autonomy is a Western-origin construct. Being a new concept for teaching, teachers’ access to the understanding learner autonomy has been limited or unavailable. It is therefore important to promote more understanding of how to incorporate new ideas such as learner autonomy in Vietnamese teacher training so that they can then be utilised effectively in the classroom.

### 6.2 Methodological Contributions

There are three main methodological contributions from the current research. The first involved the mixed-method designed that used both qualitative and quantitative data collection within a case study approach. The second contribution was the use of stimulated
recall interviews (SRI) to capture the perception teachers had of how their beliefs were manifest in teaching practices. The third contribution was the creation of a particular translation procedure for bilingual qualitative research. These three contributions are areas that have been under-reported in the literature on learner autonomy.

A mixed methods research design was used in the current research to “provide a better understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2005, p.510). To increase the validity of the research findings, the researcher collected quantitative data (a survey design) in Phase 1 of the study to gain general understanding of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and to identify the participants in the Phase 2 of the research. Finding from Phase 1 of the research provide rich data about how teachers generally in Vietnam understand the construct of learner autonomy. This data was then explored in more depth in Phase 2 (case studies) of the research. Most studies that have explored learner autonomy have utilised a quantitative method approach (Alsaq-si, 2009; Sakai, Takagi, & Chu, 2010; Yildirim, 2008). Some research has used a mixed methods approach with much greater priority on the quantitative data collected (Chan, 2003). The researcher would suggest that the research design and methods utilised in the current study adds additional and needed elements to allow for a better understanding of learner autonomy.

In addition to using a mixed methods research design the current research used stimulated recall interviews (SRI). This technique has rarely been used in Vietnamese contexts. General agreement among researchers indicates that understanding beliefs requires making inferences about what individuals say, intend, and do (Borg, 2001; Pajares, 1992). However, this is difficult to do because individuals are often unable or unwilling, for many reasons, to accurately represent their beliefs (Borg, 2001). Therefore, beliefs cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do (Borg, 2001; Parajes, 1992). In other words, beliefs do not lend themselves easily to investigation, not least because they are complex and often contradictory and also because they are not directly observable or measurable, but rather inferred. Another issue is that there is an inconsistency between beliefs and practices. This is clearly seen as a result of the current research. Through analysing the data from the SRIs, it was observed on the videos that the teachers did not employ learner autonomy strategies in their classroom. These observations contradict what they said in the initial interviews, which was that involving their students in the learning process is a requirement of their employment as university lecturers.
This contradiction should be expected because of the teachers’ lack of understanding of learner autonomy. They may have believed that they were fostering student autonomy but comments in their final interviews indicated that they realised that students had little autonomy in their learning. Therefore, the researcher would argue that the utilisation of SRI was successful and appropriate to gain an understanding of not only the participants’ beliefs about learner autonomy but how they, in this research, behaved in relation to fostering learner autonomy in their classes.

Due to the limited number of studies that employ SRI, the researcher adapted the SRI technique and developed open-ended probes that would help participants remain focused on the issue while watching their teaching practices. Bearing in mind the above considerations for using SRI in educational research, the researcher achieved the objectives of the study of exploring teachers’ beliefs and practices in relation to learner autonomy in the Vietnamese higher education context.

Cross-language qualitative research in education continues to increase. However, there seems to be inadequate discussion in the literature concerning the translation process employed by researchers that can ensure research trustworthiness. The current study makes a contribution in this field by proposing one approach for incorporating translation for educational research. The current study provides a clear depiction of the complexities involved in translating qualitative data. The methodological choice of language for interviews should be considered carefully. Most of the teachers in the current research are not sufficiently confident and proficient in using spoken English, so interviews were conducted in Vietnamese. As the thesis was written in English, there needed to be careful consideration on how to manage the data with integrity. In line with the constructivist paradigm taken in this research, assumptions that translation of qualitative data is purely objective are rejected. However, to maintain the trustworthiness of the qualitative research, it is necessary to minimise translation errors, provide detailed accounts of the translation process, involve more than one translator, and remain open for scrutiny from those seeking to access the translation process. Taking into account the resource constraints often faced by novice qualitative researchers, the current study provides some strategies that can be employed by other bilingual researchers in similar contexts. By committing to the translation quality criteria outlined in the current study, it is possible to generate a translation result that is more
trustworthy and open for examination from interested parties. To the knowledge of the current researcher, this kind of process has not been outlined in this manner before.

6.3 PEDAGOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Several practical pedagogical implications are drawn from the current research. First, the results show that the traditional classroom arrangement was dominating and this can be seen as a major indicator of the constraints hindering the fostering of learner autonomy in the class. Teachers should be made aware of this barrier and be provided with support so that they can make a change or support their students to make the changes in such simple things as their seating arrangements to support learner autonomy. It should be highlighted to teachers that such changes can bring about some impact on their teaching and, subsequently, students’ learning. In addition, within the classroom, the teachers and students need to be aware of their responsibilities in the teaching-learning process and the goal in order to negotiate and support each other if learner autonomy is the goal. The current research revealed that there was a heavy emphasis on textbook teaching and examinations. More consideration about alternative assessments should be offered to foster learner autonomy.

An unanticipated finding as a barrier to fostering learner autonomy important to note is that in Vietnam, salaries of the teachers are very low. These working conditions often mean that teachers do some out-of-class teaching (extra private teaching) for extra income for their family. Coupled with the problem of low salaries, the majority of the EFL teachers in Vietnam generally are female (Pham, 2009; Oliver, 2004) and they have to take care of household and childcare after work. These facts may be contributing factors to teachers’ reluctance to make changes to their beliefs and pedagogy when confronted with new, non-Vietnamese concepts such as learner autonomy. More research in this area is needed.

6.4 LIMITATIONS

This researcher recognises that this study has limitations. The research is limited in scope in that it explores learner autonomy in a small number of universities in Vietnam so cannot be generalised to other contexts. Although the universities where the research was conducted may be representative of universities in Vietnam, it cannot be claimed that the findings will be consistent with all universities in Vietnam.
The context of the research is also a limitation. The current study attempted to investigate teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in general rather than specific to English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning, although all participants in the study were EFL teachers in Vietnam. It cannot be claimed that the findings from the current research will be consistent with other EFL teachers in other settings or within other domains of teaching. However, the researcher would suggest that the results of the research may be considered in a broader sense to include students in other disciplines. It is recommended that more research should be done in other disciplines or areas to test the veracity of this claim.

Another possible limitation that needs to be reported here is the influence of the research on the participants. It should be noted that the participants’ definitions of learner autonomy changed over the course of data collection. It is noted in the literature that the influence of the research on the participants is unavoidable (Covell, Sidani & Ritchie, 2012). It cannot be claimed that the participants in the research were not in some way influenced in describing their beliefs or enacting teaching practices. Thus, it is strongly recommended that more research should be done in this area to address this methodological issue.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides some recommendations for teacher professional development and for further research in the field of learner autonomy. The findings of the study indicated that teachers themselves appeared to be a constraint hindering learner autonomy in the Vietnamese contexts due to their lack of understanding about the concept. It is recommended that the Vietnamese government and institutions should provide a clear understanding of how they want teachers to understand the concept of learner autonomy and how this concept should be manifest in some way at the classroom level. The results of the current study indicated that the teachers lacked professional training about learner autonomy. They themselves acknowledged the need for workshops or seminars on learner autonomy for their professional development. This support can help teachers improve their awareness of learner autonomy and how to foster learner autonomy in Vietnamese educational contexts and more specifically in their teaching contexts.

It is recommended that further research be conducted to develop a model for teacher professional development in relation to learner autonomy. It is important to note that in-service EFL teachers in Vietnam do not have many opportunities or time to gain access to
innovations in education and in teaching and learning in particular; it is suggested that professional training workshops will be a very effective channel to help them get up-to-date knowledge and information. It is suggested that a model for training teachers in fostering learner autonomy in the Vietnamese context such as that presented in Borg and AL-Busaidi’s (2012) study in Oman can be adopted or adapted. While not within the power of the researcher, the study indicated that the salary for the teachers at universities in Vietnam is still low which appears to have influenced them in dedicating more time outside their classroom, and leaving less time to devote to their teaching. It is suggested that the government should consider a study on how to improve the teaching standards and salaries for the teachers. This recommendation is consistent with others (Oliver, 2004; Pham, 2006) and can be seen as possibly one of the keys to the improvement of teaching quality in the Vietnamese context.

The results of the study suggest that there should be further research on the impact of the classroom physical arrangement and overall classroom dynamics on promoting learner autonomy in general and in Vietnamese context in particular. The results from the current study demonstrate that the traditional classroom physical arrangement dominated. Teachers appeared to have no awareness about the importance and the influence of students seating on their learning. It also may be that the teachers feel most comfortable teaching in this traditional arrangement and see no reason to change. It is recommended that more research should be done in this area to identify the relationship between teachers’ teaching zones and students’ seating arrangements in fostering learner autonomy.

Learning and teaching materials are another important aspect that needs to be considered in language education in EFL contexts in Vietnam. Textbooks play a key role in the process; both the teachers and students rely heavily on the textbook in EFL classes. Well-designed, written textbooks that are relevant to the Vietnamese context can more effectively facilitate language learners to obtain knowledge and become more autonomous in their learning. The finding of the current research demonstrated that English textbooks used in the classes were foreign written with no local context information. More authentic textbook, written by Vietnamese scholars would provide learning scenarios more relevant to Vietnamese students. The course book designers should also be aware of the role of learner autonomy and integrate scenarios in the lessons that will enhance the learner in developing
the skills to become more active in their learning. Having students as reviewers of these materials may help to make them more authentic and, therefore, more relevant to students.

The findings of the current research show that there are few chances for the students to be involved in the learning process actively; few students dare to challenge the authority of the teacher in learning process. The focus for teaching and learning at present is on the examinations. It is suggested that teachers need training to be aware of the importance of different kinds of assessments such as peer assessment or self-assessment to involve the students more in the process and support in introducing these new teaching techniques into their classrooms.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This study was an exploration into teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and how these beliefs were manifest in teaching practices. Overall, this study found evidence that teachers lacked understanding of learner autonomy and so did not utilise the concept in their teaching practices. This study provided a first important step in the examination of the relation between teachers’ beliefs and teaching practice in the field of learner autonomy specifically in Vietnamese higher education. The research identified key underlying reasons for the current situation of learner autonomy in Vietnam in that teachers do not incorporate learner autonomy in their teaching because they perceive a range of barriers to such an inclusion. These barriers include lack of understanding of the concept, lack of time, little belief that their students are capable of becoming autonomous in their learning. The teachers in the research expressed a general belief that learner autonomy was not something of great importance for Vietnamese classrooms.

While there are both real and perceived barriers that prevented teachers from implementing learning autonomy in their pedagogy there is still scope that they can, with support, do so. The current research has highlighted the need for policy considerations that clearly outline the importance of learner autonomy in Vietnamese education. These policies need to be implemented formally so that teachers can appreciate the benefits to be gained in fostering learner autonomy. In order to help teachers, the government needs to also provide teacher training through workshops and seminars on how to foster learner autonomy.

In conclusion, the current research has provided a more in-depth, study of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy and how these align with teaching practices in Vietnam.
There is a need to better understand the connections between what teachers do and what they say. The current research provides that first step by contributing theoretically, methodologically and pedagogically to better understand learner autonomy.
References


189


195

Klaus, Schwienhorst. (2012). Learner autonomy and Virtual environments in CALL. Taylor and Francis Publisher.


Little, D. (1999). Learner autonomy is more than a Western construct. In S. Cotterall & D. Crabbe (Eds.), *Learner autonomy in language learning: Defining the field and effective change* (pp. 11-18). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.


PrintPartnerIpskamp.


Appendices

Appendix A

University Human Research Ethics Committee
HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE
NHMRC Registered Committee Number EC00171
Date of issue: 30/1/12 (supersedes all previous issued certificates)

Dear Miss Thanh Nga Nguyen,

A UHREC should clearly communicate its decisions about a research proposal to the researcher and the final decision to approve or reject a proposal should be communicated to the researcher in writing. This Approval Certificate serves as your written notice that the proposal has met the requirements of the National Statement on Research involving Human Participation and has been approved on that basis. You are therefore authorised to commence activities as outlined in your proposal application, subject to any specific and standard conditions detailed in this document.

Within this Approval Certificate are:

- Project Details
- Participant Details
- Conditions of Approval (Specific and Standard)

Researchers should report to the UHREC, via the Research Ethics Coordinator, events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project, including, but not limited to:

(a) serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants; and
(b) proposed significant changes in the conduct, the participant profile or the risks of the proposed research.

Further information regarding your ongoing obligations regarding human based research can be found via the Research Ethics website http://www.research.qut.edu.au/ethics/ or by contacting the Research Ethics Coordinator on 07 3138 2091 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au

If any details within this Approval Certificate are incorrect please advise the Research Ethics Unit within 10 days of receipt of this certificate.

### Project Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Approval:</th>
<th>Human non-HREC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved From:</td>
<td>21/12/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved Until:</td>
<td>21/12/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval Number:</td>
<td>1200000007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>Learner autonomy in language learning: Teachers' beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiment Summary:</td>
<td>Explore Vietnamese English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy and how these beliefs affect their actual instructional practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Investigator Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief Investigator:</th>
<th>Miss Thanh Nga Nguyen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Staff/Students:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigator Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Donna Tangan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Denise Beedle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Participant Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approximately 500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location(s) of the Work:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University in Vietnam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Human Ethics Approval Certificate

Date of Issue: 30/1/12 (supersedes all previous issued certificates)

Conditions of Approval

Specific Conditions of Approval:
No special conditions placed on approval by the UHREC. Standard conditions apply.

Standard Conditions of Approval:
The University's standard conditions of approval require the research team to

1. Conduct the project in accordance with University policy, NHMRC / AVCC guidelines and regulations, and the provisions of any relevant State / Territory or Commonwealth regulations or legislation;

2. Respond to the requests and instructions of the University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC);

3. Advise the Research Ethics Coordinator immediately if any complaints are made, or expressions of concern are raised, in relation to the project;

4. Suspend or modify the project if the risks to participants are found to be disproportionate to the benefits, and immediately advise the Research Ethics Coordinator of this action;

5. Stop any involvement of any participant if continuation of the research may be harmful to that person, and immediately advise the Research Ethics Coordinator of this action;

6. Advise the Research Ethics Coordinator of any unforeseen development or events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project;

7. Report on the progress of the approved project at least annually, or at intervals determined by the Committee;

8. (Where the research is publicly or privately funded) publish the results of the project in such a way as to permit scrutiny and contribute to public knowledge, and

9. Ensure that the results of the research are made available to the participants.

Modifying your Ethical Clearance:
Requests for variations must be made via submission of a Request for Variation to Existing Clearance Form (http://www.research.qut.edu.au/ethics/forms/hum/vari.aspx) to the Research Ethics Coordinator. Minor changes will be assessed on a case by case basis.

It generally takes 7-14 days to process and notify the Chief Investigator of the outcome of a request for a variation.

Major changes, depending upon the nature of your request, may require submission of a new application.

Audits:
All active ethical clearances are subject to random audit by the UHREC, which will include the review of the signed consent forms for participants, whether any modifications / variations to the project have been approved, and the data storage arrangements.

End of Document
Appendix B- SURVEY

LEARNER AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: TEACHERS' BELIEFS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore English-as-a-foreign language (EFL) university teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy.

There are no correct or incorrect responses; we are merely interested in your personal point of view. All responses to this questionnaire are completely confidential and will be used for research purpose only.

This questionnaire will take you approximately 10 minutes to fill out.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation!

Section 1: Learner autonomy means….
(Please pick one of the answers below or write your own answer.)

a. A capacity that teachers can help learners to develop in the learning process.
b. The situation in which learners are totally responsible for their learning.
c. Learner’s right to take control of their own learning.
d. The same as self-study (self-instruction).
e. Teaching methodology that focuses on learners.
f. Others

Section 2: What are your responsibilities in your class?
(Please mark the corresponding answer, only one per line.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am responsible for determining the objectives for each lesson in my classroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am responsible for choosing the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
learning content for each lesson.

I am responsible for evaluating my students’ learning progress in each lesson.

I am responsible for selecting the methods and techniques to be used in each lesson.

I am responsible for monitoring the learning process in each lesson.

### Section 3: How do you evaluate your current students' autonomy?

*Please mark the corresponding answer, only one per line.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My students are able to decide the objectives for each lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students are able to choose their learning materials for each lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students are able to choose their learning activities for each lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students are able to evaluate their study outcomes of each lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section 4: What are the constraints of fostering learner autonomy in your educational context?

*Please mark the corresponding answer, only one per line.*
Learner autonomy is only achieved by certain learners.

Low level of technology application hinders fostering learner autonomy.

Examinations are barriers to the development of learner autonomy in Vietnam.

Governmental educational policy is the main constraint of fostering learner autonomy in Vietnam.

The syllabus is supposed to determine everything that a teacher does in the class.

The teachers’ knowledge about learner autonomy is a constraint to foster learner autonomy in your class.

**Section 5: Which is the best approach to foster learner autonomy in your educational context?**

*(Please mark the corresponding answer, only one per line.)*
Providing students learning materials and resources

Applying ICT into language learning

Training students to develop their skills and strategies to become autonomous

Curriculum reform

Cooperative learning with other students and teachers

Training teachers

Section 6: Are you interested in taking part in Phase 2 of the research as a case study?

(Please pick one of the answers below.)

a. Yes

b. No

Section 7: Could you please give some more information about yourself?

Full name:
Gender:
Qualification:
Institution:
Contact details:
   Email address:
   Mobile number:

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation!
Appendix B- INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

A- Initial Interview

Part 1: Background information

1. What is your full name? Gender: Male/Female
2. How old are you?
3. Which is your highest qualification? (BA, MA, PhD)
4. How long have you been an EFL teacher at this university? Have you got any other roles?

Part 2: Interview questions

1. What does the term “learner autonomy” mean to you? Can you give more details and why? (Anh (chị) hiểu cụm từ “learner autonomy” có nghĩa là gì? Tại sao?)
2. Do you consider learner autonomy important? Why (not)? (Learner autonomy có quan trọng không? tại sao?)
3. What are the characteristics of an ideal autonomous learner? (Những đặc điểm của sinh viên chủ động là gì?)
4. What do you think about your present students in terms of learner autonomy? (Anh (chị) đánh giá về sinh viên hiện tại của anh (chị) như thế nào?)
5. What are your roles in your class? (Anh (chị) hãy cho biết vai trò của anh(chị) trong lớp?)
6. What do you often do to encourage your students to become more autonomous? (Anh (chị) hãy cho biết anh (chị) đã làm những gì để tăng chủ động của người học?)
7. What is your ideal autonomous classroom like (physical settings)?
8. Can you describe your classroom? (Xin hãy giới thiệu về lớp mà anh (chị) mời dự giờ?)
9. What are the factors affecting your teaching decision? (Những yếu tố nào ảnh hưởng đến quyết định của anh (chị) trên lớp?)
10. Does the teaching and learning environment in Vietnam help or hinder the development of autonomy? In what way? (Anh (chị) đánh giá như thế nào về môi trường làm việc của anh chị? Phát huy hay can trùng (chị)) trong việc phát huy learner autonomy?)

Thank you for your cooperation!
B- Stimulated Recall Interview

Instruct the participant on the interview procedure.

1. What were you thinking when....?
2. You were..... What were your thoughts when you decided to.....?
3. Why did you decide to...?
Tell the participant about the purpose of the interview. (e.g.: As you know that we have finished all the three stimulated recall interviews. Now, we are going to have our follow-up in-depth interview to overview everything and look at all the issues deeply.)

1. How do you define the term learner autonomy?
2. What are the teachers’ roles in helping students to develop those capacity and ability? Why?
3. What are the reasons for your beliefs about learner autonomy?
4. Why do you (not) think that teacher has important role in creating an autonomous learning environment for the students?
5. What were the reasons affecting your decisions making in your class? Why?
6. You have really interesting definition about learner autonomy but in your teaching, you are mainly the knowledge provider. Why?
7. Have you heard about the accreditation governmental policy?
8. Is it possible to foster learner autonomy in Vietnam? Your class? Why (not)
9. Do you think that your authority on the class has effect on learner autonomy? Why?
10. In your opinion, what is the best way to foster learner autonomy in Vietnam? In your class?

Thank you so much for your time and cooperation!
# Appendix B- OBSERVATION PROTOCOL 1

## CLASSROOM DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University:</th>
<th>Class:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of students:</td>
<td>Room:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time: from….. to .....</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson:</td>
<td>Skill:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Materials:** Course book? Different materials?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Comments:**
Appendix B- OBSERVATION PROTOCOL 2

TEACHER’S PRACTICE REGARDING LEARNER AUTONOMY

Teacher:  
University:  
No of students:  
Time: from….. to …..  
Lesson:  
Materials: Course book? Different materials?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Teacher’s role</th>
<th>Students’ role</th>
<th>Observer’s comments</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determining objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining content and sequence of content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting methods and techniques to be used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring the process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating and reflecting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other aspects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments: