

Chapter 1, Activity 1: Introduction to the literature review

Below we have the abstract and table of contents of a sample dissertation in the field of English Language Teaching.

- **Look at the table of contents and identify where the literature review is positioned.**
- **Look at the themes covered in the literature review; these can be identified from the section headings of this chapter.**
- **Note the length of the literature review chapter in relation to the rest of the dissertation.**

Sample extract

Teachers' perspectives of learner autonomy in language learning

Abstract

This project is an investigation into teachers' perspectives of learner autonomy in language learning. Research was carried out with English language teachers and the Director of Studies (DOS) at a private ESL (English as a second language) school in Vancouver, Canada. The report focuses on teachers' beliefs in five areas: (1) teacher/student roles and responsibilities, (2) opinions and evidence of students' autonomous learning, (3) autonomous learning activities inside and outside the classroom, (4) interpretations of learner autonomy and (5) learner autonomy and the curriculum. A mixed methods approach was employed which consisted of a questionnaire survey, in which all teachers had the opportunity to take part, followed by semi-structured interviews with a small sample of teachers. Findings show that teachers feel mainly responsible for most teaching and language-related decisions inside the classroom. Student learning and progress outside the class is generally believed to be the responsibility of the student. The majority of teachers do not view their students as very autonomous, a belief also shared by the DOS. Teachers have very positive attitudes towards autonomous learning activities both inside and outside the classroom. They believe using English outside the classroom is essential in the learning process; however, they do feel that many students do not use opportunities to learn English outside class time. Teachers have a clear understanding of the concept of learner autonomy and feel it is important in language learning. There are concerns, however, that constraints within the school system such as time pressures, frequent class changes, and increased class sizes may hinder the development of learner autonomy. Some teachers feel specific courses within the school curriculum offer more opportunities for autonomous learning, others feel developing learner autonomy does not depend on the curriculum, but is rather teacher dependent.

While discussing the findings of this study, the implications for professional practice within the school where I work will also be considered. The final part of this paper will summarise the key findings and offer recommendations for future research.

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