Investigating EFL College Instructors ' Attitudes toward Using Autonomy and its impact on writing skill in Misan University

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Abstract

Autonomy is a complex socio-cognitive system, manifested in different concepts of independence and control of one's own learning process, involving capacities, abilities, attitudes, willingness, decision making, choices, planning, actions, and assessment either as a language learner or as a communicator inside or outside the classroom. This study aims at investigating EFL College instructors ' attitudes toward using autonomy in Misan Governorate. The study is restricted to college instructors ' of the English language in Misan university during the first term of the academic year 2018–2019. The total number of the participants is (25). To achieve the aim of the study, EFL College instructors ' questionnaire consisting of (51)items is applied as instruments . In order to get required data, a t-test analysis shows a statistically significant instructors' attitudes, with having stronger positive EFL College instructors ' attitudes toward using autonomy.

Introduction
1 . Problem of the study and Its Significance

Autonomous learning is significant to students for two more reasons. First, it involves how best to improve the performance of writing composition, their lexical, structural, and overall accuracy. Hence, giving the students responsibility for their learning in groups enables them to develop effective independent learning strategies in all areas.

Second, autonomous learning is significant to students when they have the chance to escape from canned knowledge and discover thousands of

information sources. As a result, their education fulfils the need for interdisciplinary learning in a multicultural world (Lee, 2002: 5).

To express the importance of learner autonomy in the modern language classroom, Esch(1997:170)suggests that helping learners take on more responsibility in the language learning process can be beneficial as they learn what they are ready to learn; as they can carry on learning outside the classroom; and as they can transfer learning strategies to other topics.

Moreover, learners at all levels of study need appropriate opportunities that help them choose their own learning experiences .Accordingly, they will consider such effective choices meaningful and beneficial ,and feel that they themselves belong to the social group of learners and the teacher, this again leads to maintenance of learners' curiosity and interest which instill in them further learning(Doll,1978 : 66).

1.2 Aims of the study
This study aims at:
1.Investigating EFL College Instructors ' Attitudes toward Using Autonomy and its impact on writing skill in Misan University.

1.3 Value of the study
The study can be useful in :

   a. exploring teachers' attitudes toward the use of autonomy in the EFL
      classroom.

b- shedding light on the students' perceptions of the influence of such

autonomy on improving their language proficiency, in general, and on their

writing skill, in particular.

1.4 Limits of the study:

This study is limited to

1- University teachers at the Department of English, College of Basic Education and College of Education at University of Misan and College of Arts, at University of Imam Al Sadeq

during the academic year ,2017-2018 in Misan Governorate.

2- University teachers at the Department of English, College of Basic Education and College of Education at University of Misan and College of Imam Al Sadeq.

1.4 Values

The study can be useful in :

1-changing the students' traditional view of learning composition to take more responsibility for their own learning, to encourage their think, and reflect critically on their learning habits;

2-providing resources in writing classrooms, students will be exposed to a wide range of texts, and will read a lot of material which will improve their mastery of specialized terminology, their ability to write proper structures in the source and the target language, and will learn more about the variety of topics that are dealt with in each field of writing composition; and

3- providing Iraqi college students with modern experiences and opportunities in English language learning .

1.6 Definitions of Basic Terms

1.6.1 Autonomy

Benson (2001: 11) states that "autonomy is the recognition of the rights of learners within educational systems".

The researcher adopts Littles' definition (1990:4) which states that autonomy is a capacity for "detachment, critical reflection, decision- making, and independent action".

literature Review

Holec (1981:14);Cotterall (1995: 195); and Sheerin(1997: 54) state that autonomy refers to the learning that involves six important learning activities. That is 1) analyzing one's own strengths, weaknesses, or language needs, 2) determining learning objectives, 3) defining the contents and learning progression, 4) selecting methods and techniques to achieve the established learning objectives, 5) monitoring the procedures of language acquisition, and 6) evaluating what has been acquired.

3.1 Research Methodology

This study has followed a descriptive research method. The descriptive method illustrates the relation between the variables, tests hypothesis and provides a describing of the features of particular individuals, situations or groups. (Jabir, 2015:52 & Kothari, 2004:2).

3.2 Population and Sample

The term population defining as an indication to all the participators of the group that is interesting of any study (Burgess, 2001:4). In this study the population of the research covers all the teachers at the Department of English / College of Basic Education / University of Masin during the academic year 2017-2018 who are (40) students.

To achieve the aims of the study, the researcher has randomly chosen the College of Education and College of Basic Education at Misan University and College of Arts at Imam Al-Sadeq University to represent the sample of the study.

3.2 Instruments

In order to achieve the aims of the study, a questionnaire has been constructed to be the main instrument used .

3.3 Construction of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a research instrument which consists of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (McColly, 1970:156).In order to gain information about the level of the students' autonomy, a questionnaire has been constructed drawing on the following sources:

___ Related literature: They are books: journals, and articles related to the Problem of the study; and

____Consulting specialists in the field EFL, i.e. Specialists in linguistics and methodology of teaching EFL.

3.3.1 Face Validity of the Questionnaire

Validity is "the extent to which a tool, measures what is supposed to measure and nothing else" (Heaton, 1975:153). In addition, face validity is helping if the items appear to be measuring what is aimed to be measured (Ebel, 1972:78). In order to make sure of the face validity of the questionnaire, its first version has been showed to the experts in the fields of linguistics and methodology of teaching EFL (See Table 1).

Table (1)

The Academic Ranks, Names, and Locations of the Jury Member

N	Academic Rank	Name	College of Education
1	Professor, Ph.D in ELT	Abbas Riza	University of Kashan
2	Asst.Prof., Ph.D in ELT	Bushra Al- Noori	University of Baghdad
3	Asst.Prof., Ph.D in ELT	Bushra Nima	University of Baghdad
4	Professor.Ph.D in ELT	Dhuha Atalla	Mostanssriy University
5	Professor, Ph.D in ELT	Fatin Kh. Al-Rifa'i	University of Baghdad
6	Professor.Ph.D in ELT	Nahida T. Al-Nasiry	University of Tikrit
7	Asst.Prof., Ph.D in ELT	Salam H.Al- Temimi	University of Baghdad
8	Asst.Prof., Ph.D in ELT	Shaima AL- Bakri	University of Baghdad

9	Professor.Ph.D in Linguistics	Mahdi Al- Kazali	University of Baghdad
10	Professor.Ph.D in Linguistics	Thomas Delaney	University of Oregon.

Depending on the experts' sights some items   have been added and others have been omitted. The final form of the questionnaire consists of (54) items distributed into seven components: 1. Setting Goals: 5 items.   2. Planning: 7 items. 3. Evaluating Learning: 12 items.   4. Materials and Classroom Activities: 13 items.   5. External Resource: 5 items.

6. Learning Style and Learning Strategies: 5 items. 7. Reflection: 7 items.

The scale consists of the following options: Always, sometimes, and rarely.

3.3.2 Pilot Administration of the Questionnaire

Reliability is "the degree to which a test or an examination measures what it does measure" (Guntlet, 1961:110). The method that has been used in this study is the test –retest method, and the results are obtained by using Pearson Correlation Coefficient formula.the questionnaire has been readministered to the same pilot sample after two weeks. The statistical treatment of the data has been obtained from the two administrations. By using Pearson Correlation Coefficient formula the result yields 0.79, whereas, by using Alpha Cronbach Formula the result yields 0.87.

3.3.3 Scoring Scheme of the Questionnaire: In order to achieve the aim of the study, the questionnaire is intended to be answered according to a three points scale (always , sometimes, or rarely).The marks are assigned as follows : always 3 , sometimes 2, rarely 1.

4. Results, Conclusions, Recommendations

Relevant to the aim and hypothesis of the study, the following results are drawn from the analysis of data. Table (2) shows the percentage, mean, median, standard deviation, and variance for each item in the questionnaire(See Chart 1).

Table (2), mean, median, std. deviation, variance, and percentage

Item	Question	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Variance	Percent of the higher choose	
Setting goals	1.	2.44	3	0.768	0.590	60%	always
	2.	2.04	2	0.840	0.707	36%	always
	3.	2.32	3	0.852	0.727	56%	always
	4.	2.40	3	0.763	0.583	60%	always
	5.	2.16	2	0.746	0.557	36%	always
Planning	6.	2.20	2	0.816	0.667	56%	always
	7.	2.16	2	0.850	0.723	56%	always
	8.	2.20	2	0.866	0.750	36%	always
	9.	2.52	3	0.585	0.343	44%	always
	10.	2.60	2	1.892	3.583	44%	always
	11.	2.56	3	0.650	0.423	48%	always
	12.	2.12	2	0.832	0.693	40%	always
Evaluating Learning	13.	2.36	3	0.757	0.573	64%	always
	14.	2.48	3	0.653	0.427	40%	always
	15.	2.36	2	0.637	0.407	52%	always
	16.	2.56	3	0.650	0.423	56%	always
	17.	2.24	2	0.778	0.607	48%	sometimes
	18.	2.44	3	0.711	0.507	64%	always
	19.	2.56	3	0.583	0.340	44%	always
	20.	2.36	2	0.637	0.407	56%	always
	21.	2.56	3	0.650	0.423	60%	always
	22.	2.24	2	0.778	0.607	48%	sometimes
	23.	2.44	3	0.711	0.507	64%	always
	24.	2.44	3	0.711	0.507	44%	always
Materials and Classroom Activities	25.	2.32	2	0.627	0.393	56%	always
	26.	2.32	3	0.802	0.643	56%	always
	27.	2.56	3	0.583	0.340	52%	sometimes
	28.	2.20	2	0.707	0.500	52%	always
	29.	2.08	2	0.759	0.577	60%	always
	30.	2.36	3	0.810	0.657	48%	sometimes
	31.	2.08	2	0.812	0.660	44%	sometimes
	32.	2.36	2	0.637	0.407	56%	always
	33.	2.36	3	0.810	0.657	36%	sometimes
	34.	2.24	2	0.778	0.607	56%	always
	35.	2.40	3	0.707	0.500	44%	always
	36.	2.44	3	0.711	0.507	52%	always
	37.	2.56	3	0.583	0.340	56%	always
	38.	2.36	2	0.637	0.407	60%	always

Chart (1) mean, median, std. deviation, variance, minimum and maximum
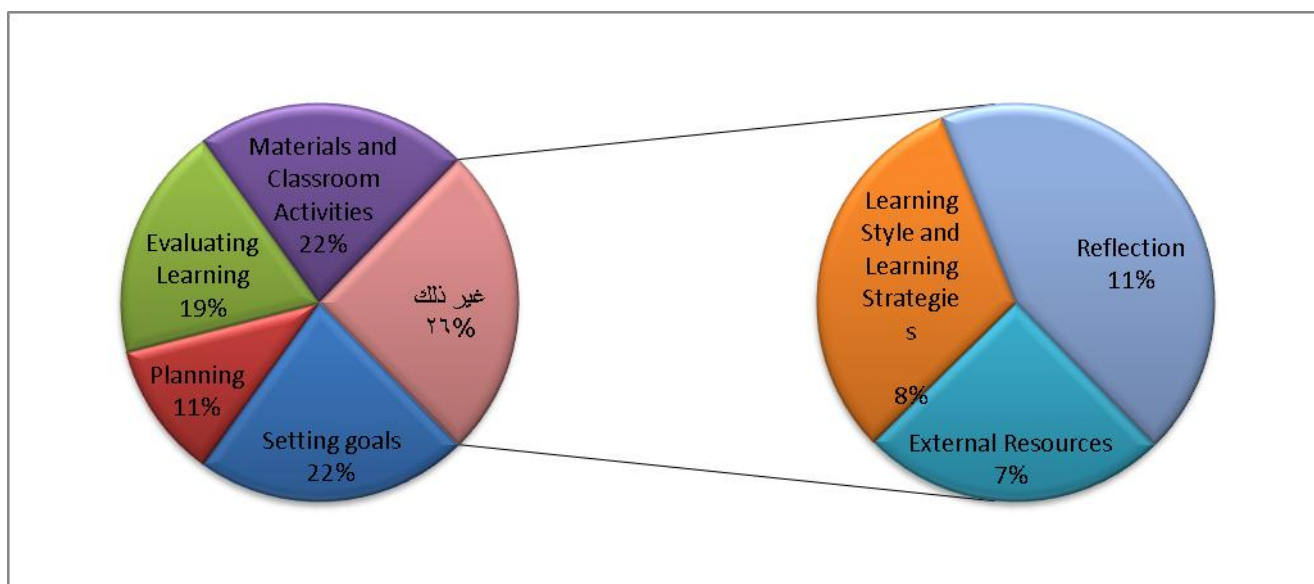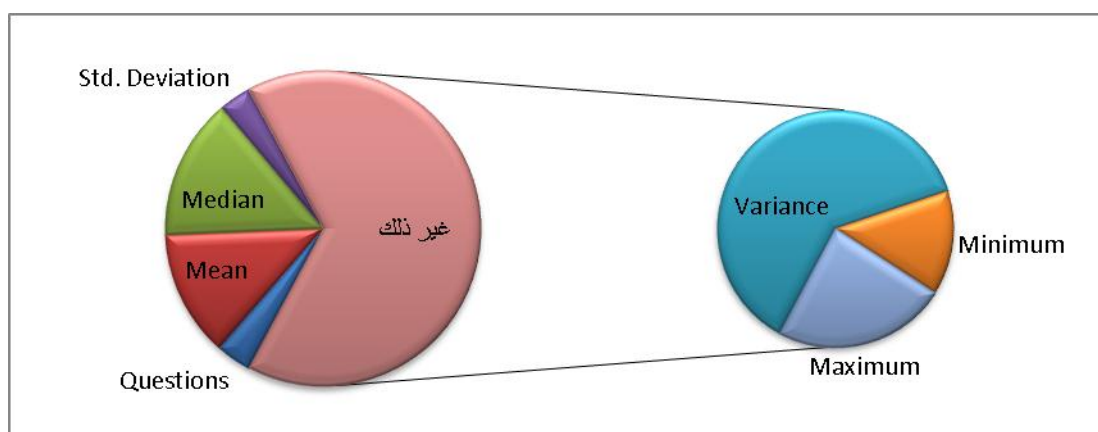


The result of each item as the following below:

1- Setting Goals: it has (5) questions, its mean (49.6), median (56), standard deviation (12.52), variance (165.8) minimum (36), and maximum (60). (See Table 3 and Chart 2)

Table (3)

Setting Goals	
Questions	5
Mean	49.6
Median	56
Std. Deviation	12.52
Variance	156.8
Minimum	36
Maximum	60

Chart (2)

2- Planning: it has (7) questions, its mean (46.28), median (44), standard deviation (7.60), variance (57.90) minimum (36), and maximum (56). (See Table 4 and Chart 3)

Table (4)

Planning	
Questions	7
Mean	46.28
Median	44
Std. Deviation	7.60
Variance	57.90
Minimum	36
Maximum	56

Chart (3)
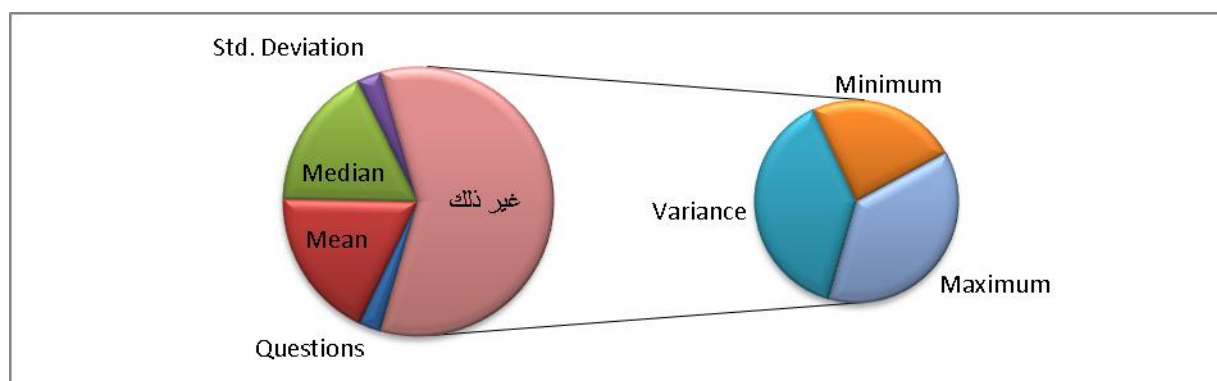
3- Evaluating Learning: it has (12) questions, its mean (53.33), median (54), standard deviation (8.58), variance (73.69) minimum (40), and maximum (64). (See Table 5 and Chart 4)

Table (5)

| Evaluating Learning	
Questions	12
Mean	53.33
Median	54
Std. Deviation	8.58
Variance	73.69
Minimum	40
Maximum	64

Chart (4)
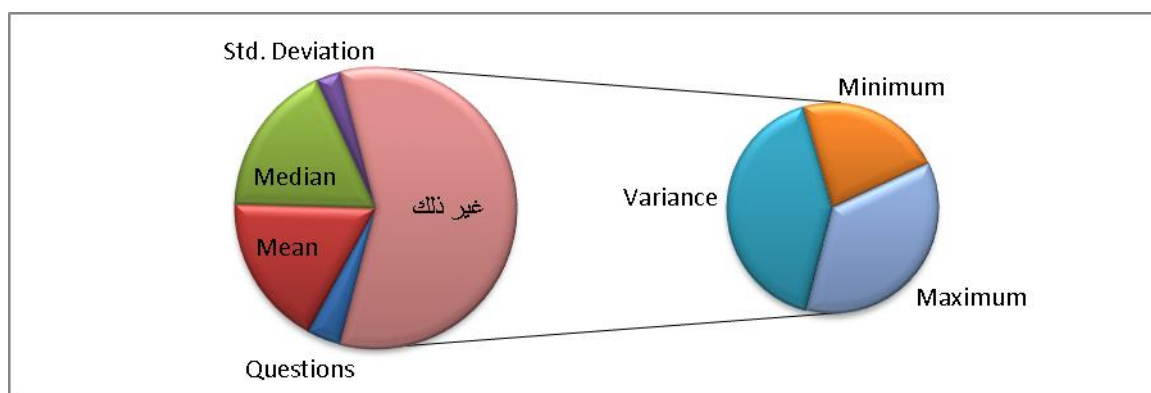
4- Materials and Classroom Activities : it has (13) questions, its mean (52), median (54), standard deviation (6.83), variance (46.76) minimum (36), and maximum (60). (See Table 6 and Chart 5)

Table (6)

Materials and Classroom Activities

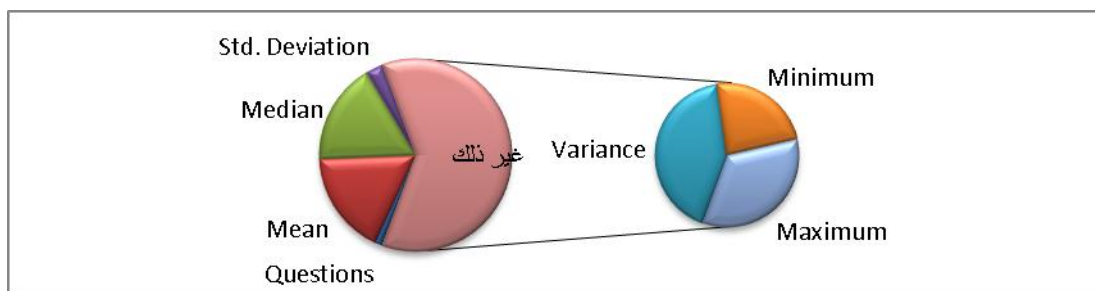| Questions	13
Mean	52
Median	54
Std. Deviation	6.83
Variance	46.76
Minimum	36
Maximum	60

Chart (5)
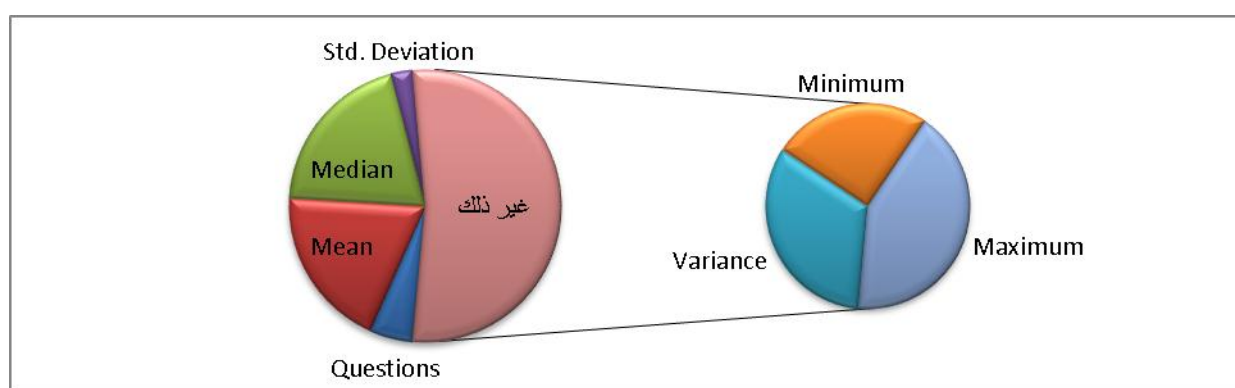
5- **External Resources:** it has (5) questions, its mean (53), median (52), standard deviation (8.86), variance (78.66) minimum (44), and maximum (64). (See Table 7 and Chart 6)

Table (7)

| Materials and Classroom Activities	
Questions	5
Mean	53
Median	52
Std. Deviation	8.86
Variance	78.66
Minimum	44
Maximum	64

Chart (6)

6- Learning Style and Learning Strategies: it has (5) questions, its mean (65.6), median (64), standard deviation (14.58), variance (212.8) minimum (48), and maximum (88). (See Table 8 and Chart 7)

Table (8)

| Learning Style and Learning Strategies	
Questions	5
Mean	65.6
Median	64
Std. Deviation	14.58
Variance	212.8
Minimum	48
Maximum	88

Chart (7)
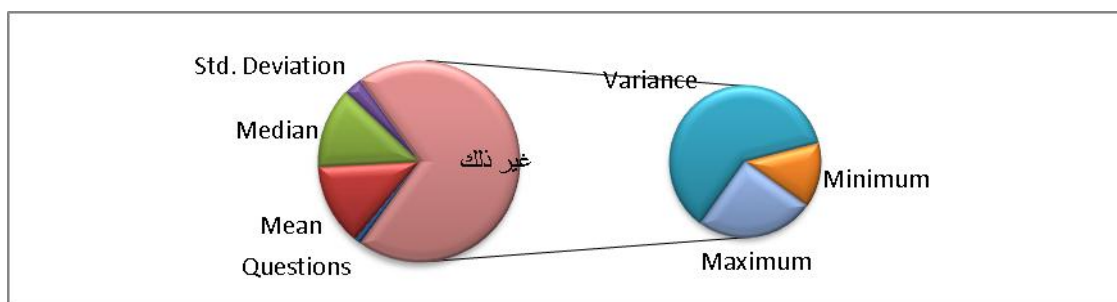
7- **Reflection:** it has (7) questions, its mean (63.42), median (60), standard deviation (12.94), variance (167.61) minimum (48), and maximum (88). (See Table 9and Chart 8)

Table (9)

Reflection	
Questions	7

Mean	63.42
Median	60
Std. Deviation	12.94
Variance	167.61
Minimum	48
Maximum	88

Chart (8)
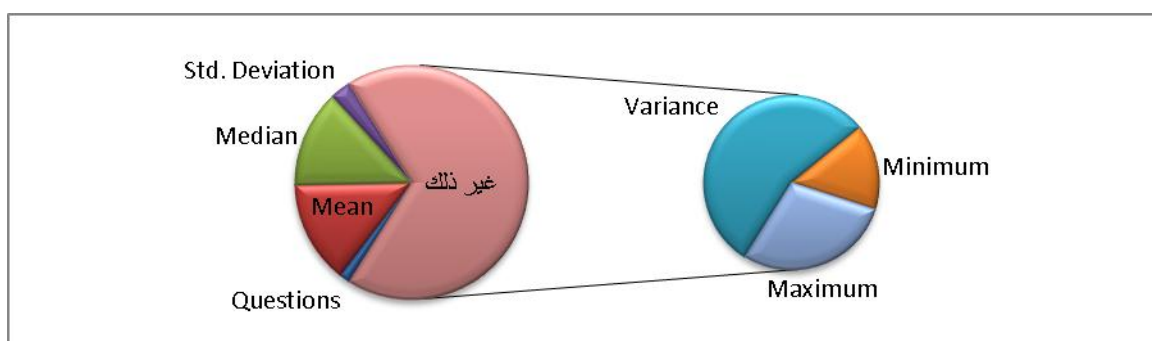
4.2 Conclusions

From the results above it is concluded that:

1. There is no problem that student autonomy is built on the constructivism, which shows that the student has to build his/her own knowledge.

4.4 Suggestions

In the light of the findings of the study further studies have been suggested:

1. Teaching teaching composition writing at other levels of study by using The autonomous learning programme .

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