The Exploration of Students' Perception toward Autonomous English Language Learning

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The study aims to investigate the students' perception of autonomous English learning. This research is explanatory whereby a mixed mode of quantitative and qualitative approaches are employed in different sectionals respectively. Quantitative data is the main method of this study, while qualitative data is used to support quantitative data based on Implicit Theory. In this research, quantitative data were obtained from the students' survey by filling out questionnaires on the self-assessment checklist. Meanwhile, qualitative data was obtained from interviews. The data were obtained in the form of interviews and student surveys. Survey research was conducted by collecting 235 questionnaires from students and afterward, the researcher interviewed 9 students. To analyze the data collected from the questionnaire and the interview, the researcher used descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings indicate that students perceive themselves as autonomous in English learning. Students of English study programs are relatively better at understanding instructors' teaching objectives and requirements and monitoring the use of learning strategies. Additionally, they are relatively weaker in setting up personal learning objectives and study plans, effectively using learning strategies, and monitoring and evaluating the English learning process. ***How to Cite***: Volya, D., Hadiyanto, Haryanto, D., Abrar, M., & Arif, N. (2025). The Exploration of Students' Perception toward Autonomous English Language Learning. *Indonesian Language Education and Applied Linguistics Reviews, 1*(1), 53-60.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia's education policy towards global impact, universities are expected to equip and develop the skills, expertise and autonomy of students. Promoting the independent learning ability of students is a priority of English language teaching, which is reflected in university curricula. However, both Indonesian teachers and students cannot choose or control their learning content because they have to follow and implement institutional and national curricula (Huang, 2015). Teachers also stand in their comfort zone, while students do not know why they are studying. Thus, this phenomenon has become a tradition of Indonesian teachers and students in teaching and learning. As stated by (Karea, 2016) that Indonesia has a big problem in implementing the curriculum, while teachers have problems with behavior problems. Therefore Kleinsasser et al., (1995) state that broader knowledge and deeper awareness of a teacher with different components and dimensions of teaching, such as learning autonomy, is better prepared to make appropriate judgments and decisions in teaching.

In the Indonesian context, the challenges of teaching English have led to many government efforts to improve its quality and many changes in the curriculum (Dardjowidjojo, 2000; Hamied, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Marcellino, 2008) in (Karea, 2016). Although the concept of student autonomy is not directly mentioned in the educational discourse, this concept exists on a conceptual level and attempts are made to promote it in the classroom (Cirocki et al., 2019). The

concept is included in the upper secondary school curriculum of 2013, which indicates that it aims to create competent lifelong learners who are proactive and independent to face local and global challenges, and the teaching-learning aims to promote critical thinking, problem solving, communication, creativity, innovation and student collaboration (Kemdikbud, 2017). As noted by (Na & Hipertensiva, n.d.), there are many reasons for the emergence of learner autonomy. These include: the concept of lifelong learning, the explosion of information, which includes the increase in the quantity and quality of learning, the increase in the number of students, which requires the search for alternative educational methods for people with different needs, opportunities and preferences.

The commercialization of education, where private language schools see the needs of students as consumers, educational technology as development, where students no longer have to attend classes, but also the increasing importance of languages in education in general with internationalization business and education. At the university level, students are forced to become independent and make conscious efforts to learn the language outside the classroom simply because exposure to the target language is limited in university classes, as noted by (Macaskill & Denovan, 2013)Bryde and Milburn 1990; Chemers, Hu and Garcia 2001; Stephenson and Laycock (1993) that university studies require students to be independent learners. Students must develop their skills and strategies and perform the tasks, activities and processes necessary to effectively participate in communication events. Thus, learner autonomy plays an important role in developing and improving language skills. Students can learn by themselves and study independently. They can learn much more without limitations.

English Language Study Program, FKIP Universitas Jambi (here in after referred to as English UNJA) is an academic unit of the Faculty of Teacher Education and Training (FKIP) Universitas Jambi in Indonesia, whose main purpose is to educate and train future teachers, junior researchers. and entrepreneurs. . in English language education and related fields. With +40 faculty members and an enrollment of +500 students per year, the English Graduate Program offers a BA in English Language Education (Sarjana Pendidikan). Currently, the category of accreditation of the English-language degree program is A by the National Council for Accreditation of Higher Education (BAN-PT no. 5937/SK/BAN-PT/Akred/S/IX/2020 23.9.2020). The latest curriculum of the English curriculum of Universitas Jambi is Curriculum 2021, which is given to students from 2021 and beyond, it is implemented according to the policy of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) initiated by the Ministry of Education and culture (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan) in 2020. In which the main programs of MB-KM are: the ease of opening new study programs, changes in the higher education accreditation system, the ease of state universities to become state universities of a legal entity, and the right to study for three semesters outside the curriculum.

Students are given the freedom to take credits outside the course, three semesters designed as 1 semester opportunity to complete studies outside the course and two semesters for study activities outside the university. In addition, there are different forms of study outside of higher education, including internships/work experience in industry or other workplaces, implementing social work projects in villages, teaching in units, participating in student exchanges, doing research, doing business, doing studies/independent project and following humanitarian programs. All these activities must be done under the guidance of a lecturer. Independent campuses should provide industry-context experiences that improve the student's general skills, job readiness or create new jobs. Therefore, some reform steps must be taken in introducing the autonomy of the foreign language. In addition, this study presents EFL students' perceptions of implementation of autonomous learning of the English language.

The conception of autonomy

The concept of autonomy entered the field of language teaching and learning for the first time through the Modern Languages Project of the Council of Europe established in 1971 (Benson, 2011). One of the achievements of the project was the establishment of the Center de Recherches et d'Applications en Langues (CRAPEL) at the University of Nancy in France (Holec, 1981), which

soon became the focus of research and practice in the field. . Holec's project report (1981) to the Council of Europe is a prime early document on the autonomy of language learning and teaching. Holec (1981) defined autonomy as "the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning." This widely cited definition has served as a framework for research and practice in language teaching and learning. To Holec (1981), "taking charge of one's own language learning" involves determining learning objectives, learning content, and learning progression, selecting learning methods and techniques, monitoring acquisition, and evaluating learning outcomes

Moreover, to mark autonomous learning, according to Hasim and Zakaria (2015), learners are autonomous either individually or in groups; they focus on being independent and collaborative in autonomous language learning; they learn to take responsibility for their own learning; and they learn to be self-directed and make decisions about their own learning. Furthermore, Nunan and Lamb (2001) say that the aims of learner autonomy in the context of language classroom are to achieve language goal and learning process goals. (Manivannan, 2018) says that learner autonomy relates to learner responsibilities and learner motivation. Learner's strong motivation and desire to learn, to explore the world of English, and to learn new vocabulary usages, and knowledge of their own is very important. Furthermore, (Boonma & Swatevacharkul, 2020) states that for public speaking classroom, it is believed that learner autonomy can be applied depend upon the students' responsibility and capacity to manage their own learning in preparation and rehearsals of their speeches in and out of classes.

In addition, Littlewood (1999) describes the characteristics of autonomous learning. He proposes two main characteristics of learner autonomy. These are (1) students must take responsibility for their own learning, because all learning can in any case only be done by the students themselves, and also because they need to develop the ability to continue learning after the formal education ends. (2) "Taking responsibility" means that students take over (partially or fully) many of the processes that traditionally belonged to the teacher, such as deciding learning objectives, choosing teaching methods and the evaluation process. In addition, the criteria of a good language learner are related to an independent learner. Furthermore, Dickinson, L (1992) states that in many areas of learning, effective students are active and independent. They define goals, formulate their own goals and modify goals according to their learning needs and interests. They use effective learning strategies and try to control their own learning.

The Level of Learner Autonomy

The degree of learner autonomy can be seen from a lower to a higher level (Benson, 2011). Learners with a high level of autonomy can control their learning activity as well as determine its directions. Meanwhile, learners with a low level of autonomy can only perform some specific activities of learner autonomy. Littlewood (1996) elucidated three levels of autonomy. At the communicative level, students can make choices about the practice of language and appropriate strategies when communicating in certain situations and tasks. At the learning level, students are expected to use appropriate learning strategies independently. On a personal level, students can make choices about language learning in a broader context. Littlewood then introduced proactive and reactive autonomy in 1999. Proactive autonomy indicates that students have complete autonomy, while reactive autonomy means that students work after receiving instruction from teachers.

Nunan (1997) proposed five levels of promoting student autonomy. According to his model, the first level is consciousness. Here the students become aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the material used. The second is participation; learners are engaged in choosing their goals from the available options. The third is intervention; students are involved in designing and adapting the objectives and content of the study program. The fourth is creation; learners create their own goals and objectives. And finally, transcendence; (ÇAKICI, 2015)Littlewood (1999) mentioned two main characteristics of autonomy. First, to be an independent learner, students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning, and second, taking responsibility requires students to take responsibility for their own learning. Therefore, it is clear that independent learners are actively involved in their own learning and are able to learn outside the classroom.

Meyer (2001), Carr (1999), Derrick (2001), and Ponton (1999) developed and validated instruments that assess dimensions of student "desire," "invention," "initiative" and "persistence." Meyer's framework consists of three elements: basic freedoms (understanding situations and expression problems), power management (group identity, growth and balance, and love issues), and change skills (basic communication skills and basic change behaviors). Carr (1999) states that resourcefulness for an autonomous learner means to gather and assess the internal and external resources needed for a learning experience. (Ponton & Rhea, 2006)) defined initiative as active goal-directedness in problem solving and initiating an action. Derrick, (2002) conceptualized persistence as the sustained maintenance of three behaviors: volition, self-regulation, and goal-directedness. Volition represents the motivation to sustain an intended behavior. Self-regulation refers to maintaining activities that coincide with one have integrated self (Ponton et al., 2004) while goal-directedness is the behavior of establishing goals which help to enhance motivation of the learners for action (Confessore and Park, 2004).

2. METHODS

In this study, the researcher intended to find out autonomous learning at English study program of University of Jambi. The autonomous learning consisting of five developmental components: Understanding instructors' teaching objectives and requirements, setting up personal learning objectives and study plans, using learning strategies in an effective way, monitoring the use of learning strategies, monitoring and evaluating the English learning process (Xu, Peng and Wu, 2004, cited in Pu, 2009)

This research is explanatory in nature whereby a mixed mode of quantitative and qualitative approach is employed in different sectional respectively. However, quantitative is the main method of this study, while qualitative data used to support quantitative data based on Implicit Theory ((Unjana et al., 2018)Creswell, 2012).

In this research, the researcher obtained qualitative data from interviews. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were obtained from the students' survey by filling questionnaires on the self-assessment checklist. The data were obtained in the form of interviews and students' surveys. This research conducted at English study program of University of Jambi. The students came from various regencies, from out of Jambi city and from Jambi city. The higher education institution consists of academic year students. 75 students of academic year 2022/2023, 78 students of academic year 2020/2021, 58 students of academic year 2019/2020, 54 students of academic year 2018/2019, 2022/2023, composed of different genders (male and female). The questionnaire was adapted from (Genç, 2015). Xu, Peng, and Wu (2004) originally designed the questionnaire based on five factors. The student understands the teaching goals and requirements of the teacher, sets personal learning goals and study plans, uses learning strategies effectively, monitors the use of learning strategies, monitors and evaluates learning English (Pu, 2009).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the statistical results, the mean of the 234 participants' autonomous learning was 3.85. As the questionnaire was a 5-likert scale survey with 5.00 as the highest score and 1.00 as the lowest score, the result indicated, in general students of English study program in this study reported having moderately high autonomous learning. Students' perception of autonomous English learning divided into two categories they are students' perception of their understanding instructors' teaching objectives and requirements, setting up personal learning objectives and study plans.

Students' perception of understanding instructors' teaching objectives and requirements can be seen in table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Students' level of understanding instructors' teaching objectives and requirements

Understanding instructors' teaching objectives and requirements:	Mean	level
I understand the course requirements and the class requirements.	3,7179	high
I am able to turn the teacher's teaching objectives into my own learning objectives.	3,3461	high
I know it's very important to study hard according to the course objectives.	4,1659	high
I know why the teacher would use a certain class activity to improve my English	3,9957	high
I feel I can keep up with the progress of the course.	3,7319	high
Overall	**3,7915**	**high**

As displayed in table 1, the overall mean score of students' level of understanding instructors' teaching objectives and requirements is high level of 3,7915. Moreover, the students perceive understanding instructors' teaching objectives and requirements for statement understand the course requirements and the class requirements was high level of 3,7179. the students perceive turning the teacher's teaching objectives into his/her own learning objectives were high level of 3,3461. The students perceive the very important to study hard according to the course objectives were high level of 4, 1659. The students perceive the reason why the teacher would use a certain class activity to improve my English was high level of 3, 9957. The students perceive feeling keep up with the progress of the course was high level of 3, 7319.

Considering the mean value shown in the table 1, it can be understood that the participants adopt the principles of autonomous learning in various way. As can be seen in the table, the items, related to the students' awareness about the course requirements and the importance of their own efforts in studying were very high. They reported that they were not quite successful at adopting the teaching objectives of the teachers into their own learning. As a result of these findings based on the learners' choices of items 1,2,3,4 and 5, it is possible to claim that the learners in this research are at awkward stage of autonomy and they are quite aware of the important of understanding the course requirements and objectives and slowly internalizing the objectives of the lecturers and class activity.

The mean score in the table 1 also supported by the respondent answer in which one of the respondents (Everin) says that to understand the instructors' teaching objective and requirement she has to know the goals of learning. Sadrin further adds that usually at the first meeting the lecturers always tell them about what plans they will do during the 16x meeting and as a student she always observes the way the lecturers teach, and consider the assignments given so that they can adjust to the style that the lecturer wants. However, Cema honestly, doesn't really give any special treatment to understand about the instructor's' requirement. But, if she has any problem she will ask directly and ask the finest solution. For Safi, by looking at the approach used by the instructor is one way to understand instructors' teaching objective and requirement. Finally Elis concludes that of course, all teachers need preparation when starting their classes. One of the most important instruments is preparing teaching instructors such as a learning syllabus, preparing good and creative communication, as well as providing contextual information in their learning.

Students' level of setting up personal learning objectives and study plans can be seen in table 2 as follows:

Table 2. Students' level of setting up personal learning objectives and study plans

Setting up personal learning objectives and study plans:	Mean	Level
Besides tasks and assignments, I will make my own English study plan	3,7596	high
I make my own study objectives according to my own situation.	3,8290	high
I adjust my study plan if necessary	3,7801	high
I make a time plan to study English	3,8197	high
I set up my English study objectives according to the syllabus	3,3617	high
Overall	**3,7100**	**high**

As displayed in table 2 the overall mean score of students' level of setting up personal learning objectives and study plans is high level of 3,71007. It indicates that the students have high perceive on setting up personal learning objectives and study plans. However, looking into the statements of setting up personal learning objectives and study plans in detail, students of English study program rated their application of statement (Besides the class tasks and assignments, I will make my own English study plan), (I make my own study objectives according to my own situation), (I adjust my study plan if necessary). (I make a time plan to study English), (I set up my English study objectives according to the syllabus) at high level.

Considering the mean value shown in the table 2, it can be understood that participants mostly agreed that they were able to arrange their own study plans and rearrange them if needed which reveal their ability of autonomous studies to some extent. Nevertheless, their lower score of the items "I make a time plan to study English" showed that they were neither good enough time management for their studies nor competence about syllabus of the courses.

The mean score in table 2 also supported by respondent answer that to set learning objectives and study plan Everin says that she writes down and remember all her goals of learning. Sadrin further describes that during her study, she usually makes a study schedule by focusing on the hours and days to be determined, for example, she usually starts from 10-3 pm, after that she takes a break and do it on holidays such as Saturday / Sunday. If there are assignments she usually has to prepare earlier. She sometimes starts on the third or second day of collection, because she has to understand the questions and the meaning of the assignment given. Cema confesses that she is a planner person. So she gets used to make to do list every day before she starts her day. Safi says that she used to adapt her activities. Elis says that she should identify her goals, make her objectives as specific as possible, allocate time, and stay motivated. Eldin says that of course, guided by the existing syllabus. She will prepare the learning module first as a reference for what she must achieve in learning, with a good learning module the learning objectives will be achieved and carried out well.

Quantitative finding discussed in the previous part revealed that Students of English study program have positive responds toward understanding instructors' teaching objectives and requirements, setting up personal learning objectives and study plans in autonomous English learning. The findings were supported by findings from interview that show autonomous learning were used not in all subjects in English study program.

 In the process of learning at English study program, the application of autonomous learning can be seen along online learning in which in online learning most of activities done are through zoom plat form. Regarding students' motivation to learn independently, there are several indications in this study. The students in this study stated that motivation is quite high. Unfortunately, this did not seem to reflect the expected independent learning behavior. It was also quite clear that such independent group work, done independently of the assigned coursework, was rare. In general, students did not appear to display what is generally considered autonomous learning behavior. Furthermore, it appeared that many of the English students in this study displayed just the kind of independent behavior that allowed them to meet the high workload of the curriculum and generally pursue their studies. In other words, they may have adopted an externally motivated approach that aimed only to meet course completion requirements and use surface learning methods that prevented further efforts for more active language learning.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The results show that students feel quite independent in language learning. Considering the important components of independent learning, it is easy to see that students in the English curriculum have a relatively better understanding of the teaching objectives and requirements of the teachers and control the use of learning strategies. In addition, they are relatively weaker in setting personal learning goals and study plans. These findings should not be taken as surprising and should not be evaluated without considering the practice of Jambi University institutions. Since English language courses at all educational levels in Jambi are structured by ready-made

curricula and textbooks, unfortunately, students and sometimes teachers do not have the opportunity to participate in decisions about the choice of materials, techniques, and methods. As a result of the practice of these educational institutions, students are not able to make sufficient independent decisions about setting their goals monitoring their progress, and learning at their own pace and based on their interests. In these spaces, it is best to understand and internalize the goals of the teachers or courses and create study plans to achieve the final goals of the courses.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

A drawback of this study is that it only included a small number of participants from one institution; therefore, testing participants from elementary and middle schools across the nation and the globe should be included in future studies. Determining whether or not the learner autonomy of male and female learners is associated with English competence is another area that needs more research.

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