A SURVEY ON ESL LEARNERS' AUTONOMY IN ENGLISH LEARNING AT DONG NAI UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The concept of learner autonomy has gained traction in the context of language acquisition for 2 decades (Little, 1991). Numerous researches on learners' attitudes and behaviors related to learner autonomy have been carried out in Vietnam. However, there is a dearth of data regarding EFL students' perspective and practices of autonomous learning, particularly in light of the current trend towards student-centered education. To aid in closing this disparity, this study aims to report on an investigation into Dong Nai University EFL students' beliefs and practices of autonomous learning. The study was carried out for 6 weeks in the first semester of school year 2023-2024 at Dong Nai University, Vietnam. The research employed a quantitative method by using a questionnaire to gather data from 80 English-majored students. Besides, the Software Package of Statistics for Social Science was used for data analysis. The findings showed that the students agreed on the significance of learner autonomy for language learning. They believed they could act autonomously, but only to a slightly above-average degree. This outcome matched the data on their frequency scale of self-reported autonomous activity practices. Thus, it is recommended that learner autonomy should be incorporated into English language teaching and learning by making it a crucial component of the EFL curriculum to improve learner autonomy in English teaching and learning in Vietnam in general and at Dong Nai University in particular. Moreover, this paper can be used as a reference for EFL lecturers in Dong Nai University and other schools who show their interest in learner autonomy.

Keywords: Abilities; Autonomy; learner autonomy; perceptions; practices

1. Introduction

When education turns into a self-education process, both the effectiveness and quality of education are enhanced. These days, learning on one's own is an essential part of the educational process. To improve their skills and fulfill the expectations of the workforce in the future, students need to establish the habit of autonomous learning.

The ability of learners to learn on their own is crucial and directly contributes to the improvement of residential training universities. For higher education, autonomous learning is possibly considered a way of learning at the university level, which is institutionalized in Clause 2, Article 7 of Education Law that The approach of higher education must pay attention to fostering the ability of autonomous learning, autonomous research;

facilitating learners to develop their critical thinking, self-train practical skills, conduct research, experiment, application. Autonomous learning can take place in many different forms, including reading books, watching educational videos, taking free or paid online courses, discussing with learning communities, practicing through personal projects. Autonomous learning helps learners develop themselves, improve their professional skills or personal interests, and adapt to rapid changes in society and the labor market. However, students are still passive learners since most of them have little understanding of autonomous learning. students are unable to recognize the significance of autonomous learning and self-training because of the influence of the one-way thinking learning approach and simply being accustomed to absorbing taught knowledge. The areas where students still have limitations can be attributed to their incomplete understanding of the requirements and advantages of autonomous learning. As a result, learners cannot organize their learning, set aside time for learning assignments, and engage in active and proactive study habits. Additionally, students lack the skills how to fully utilize and optimize external resources like friends, the Internet, technology, library as well as their internal resources such as the ability to assume ownership of their learning and to independently plan, coordinate, and oversee their learning process.

Furthermore, even though many schools have implemented several initiatives to increase the efficacy of student activities, some teachers still lack concern for or a sufficient understanding of students' autonomous learning. As a result, this talent has not received much attention in the teaching strategies of many instructors. Instead, students who want to learn effectively must have full awareness and understanding of autonomous learning skills. Each student's perception plays a role in orienting all activities, so with proper awareness, that student will be self-conscious about their activities and choose an appropriate direction for autonomous learning and autonomous practices.

The concept of autonomy has recently been considered an important factor in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. It is one of the primary goals of any language program in Vietnam, particularly since the majority of the nation's universities use a credit-based system that forces students to assume greater responsibility for their own learning. While educators, researchers, and teachers have been interested in the idea of learner autonomy in various situations since the mid-1970s (Chan, 2015), it was not awarded enough attention by researchers in Vietnam until recently (Nguyen, 2016). Despite several attempts to explore teachers' views and practices in this area, few studies have been done to offer important insights into how learner autonomy is viewed and applied by Vietnamese EFL students in general, and at Dong Nai University in particular. This study aims to close this

gap by investigating how EFL students in Dong Nai University context perceive and use learner autonomy.

2. Literature review

2.1. Conceptions of learner autonomy

The concept of autonomy has grown in significance in recent normative philosophical discussions, both in theoretical and applied situations. As in Dworkin (2015)' study, a person can only be considered independent when they are able to identify with and integrate the factors that inspire them. Furthermore, there are procedural requirements that this identification procedure itself must adhere to.

Learner autonomy is found to be quite a complex notion not only from the semantic view point, but also for several other reasons. It incorporates ideas from several academic fields, including as politics, language, philosophy, and so forth. Benson and Voller (1997) clearly distinguishes between "learner autonomy" and "selfdirected learning." He defines "autonomous learning" as the unique personal quality connected to this capacity, whereas "self-directed learning" refers to learners' overall capacity to carry out learning. However, some people consider the phrase "learner autonomy" to be interchangeable with individualization. He claims that other words are associated with autonomy and can be differentiated from it in different ways. Nowadays, many people concur that autonomy and autonomous learning are distinct concepts from self-access, self-instruction, self-study, self-education,

or distant learning (Benson, 2007). These concepts allude to different approaches and levels of of learning by oneself; whereas autonomy refers to abilities or attitudes. The issue lies in the fact that learning by oneself does not equate to the ability to learn by oneself. Thus, there is semantic complexity.

In language learning, learner autonomy is a complex concept that has been characterized in a variety of ways. Holec (1983) (as cited in Joshi, 2011) defines autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's learning" by determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition by properly speaking; and evaluating what has been acquired (p. 13). Cotterall (1995) clarifies learner autonomy by examining the extent to which students can employ a range of strategies to take charge of their own learning. The strategies include goal-setting, task selection, practice opportunity planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation of learning outcomes. These techniques' variables are also referred to as metacognitive factors because they place a strong emphasis on self-regulated learning skills, or the ability to organize, monitor, and evaluate learning (Trinh, 2005). In elaborating on the term, it is assumed that students may employ these strategies at varying degrees depending in part on how they view language acquisition. Notably, a lot of researchers claim that autonomy entails some degree of learning flexibility. In

essence, learner autonomy can be defined as the capacity to take charge of one's own affairs or the ability to act in a situation where the learner bears complete responsibility for all decisions related to his learning and for carrying out these decisions in an autonomous and conscious manner. In order to achieve this, Holec (1981) outlines the actions that self-directed learners take in the following ways: (a) assuming responsibility for deciding on their own learning objectives and goals; (b) specifying the subject matter and enhancements of their education; (c) choosing the strategies and tactics to be used; (d) tracking the progress of their learning; and (e) assessing what they have learned.

According to Oxford Dictionary (2003, p.111), autonomous learning more comprehensively as it is "the ability and willingness to perform a task without assistance, with adaptability related to the situational demands, with transferability to other relevant contexts, and with reflection, accompanied by relevant action (the use, usually conscious and intentional, of appropriate learning strategies) reflecting both ability and willingness". The core of autonomous learning is conceptualized by some other scholars as denoting an autonomous learner showing initiative (Ponton, 1999), and persistence (Derrick, 2001) in his or her self-directed learning activity. In other words, an autonomous person can make and carry out the choices that govern his or her actions independently. This capacity includes two factors, ability, and willingness. While willingness denotes motivation and confidence that learners must take ownership of their education, ability specifically refers to the knowledge and abilities of the learners to carry out tasks deemed appropriate for learning. According to Lengkanawati (2017), the ability is what a self-directed learner possesses to decide for himself/herself when it comes to setting learning goals, outlining learning materials and progressions, selecting learning strategies, keeping an eye on acquisition processes, and assessing learning outcomes.

2.2. Previous studies on learner autonomy

While a great deal of studies has been done to examine teachers' attitudes and behaviors around learner autonomy in many settings, students' perceptions and experiences with autonomous learning have received little attention. This study examines earlier research on learner autonomy in both Vietnamese and foreign contexts.

For abroad studies, in Indonesia, Ramadhiyah and Lengkanawati (2019) showed that the teacher understood learner autonomy at a fundamental level, which was in line with the technical dimension's requirements that students' complete extracurricular activities on their own outside of the classroom; The teacher attempted to encourage student autonomy even though this was done in the absence of real resources. In another context setting of a Thailand university, Boonma and Swatevacharkul (2020) carried out a study to first look at how the autonomous learning process affected the degree of learner autonomy

among undergraduate students and then looked at how this process showed learner autonomy. The results demonstrate that the autonomous learning process had a significant positive impact on the student's degree of learner autonomy. Yildirim (2008) researched the readiness of Turkish EFL students for self-directed learning. The study's specific goal was to investigate three different aspects of autonomous learning: learner autonomy practices, learner autonomy skills, and learner perceptions of roles and responsibilities. According to the findings, students believed that teachers and students shared responsibility for the majority of classroom activities. Additionally, the result was shown that students believed they could learn on their own and were prepared to use various extracurricular activities that may improve their independence.

In Vietnamese contexts, Le (2018) investigated the perspectives and behaviors of Vietnamese EFL students on learner autonomy. In this study, learner autonomy was examined using a four-pronged framework: (1) understanding one's learning obligations; (2) being able and willing to make learning plans and set goals; (3) choosing resources, tactics, and methods to carry out learning activities both with and without teacher support; and (4) assessing learning processes and results. The findings indicated that every participant agreed that students must gain the independence to make their own decisions and acknowledged the critical role that learner autonomy plays at the university level.

Additionally, the results showed that they displayed varying degrees of autonomous learning behaviors. Another study in a Vietnamese environment conducted by Truong, et al. (2019) examined learner perceptions about autonomous learning across four dimensions at Hung Vuong University (1) the importance of learner autonomy, (2) the responsibilities of learner autonomy, (3) the abilities of learner autonomy, and (4) the behaviors of learner autonomy. The results pointed out that the students' emphasis on the value of learning autonomy in the process of learning English. They acknowledged that they had independent obligations, such as choosing learning activities and tactics, setting learning targets, and monitoring their progress, but they also acknowledged that they had certain limitations on their autonomy.

Since learner autonomy is a multifaceted concept, it is impossible to interpret the term adequately from a single angle. As can be seen from the majority of the studies mentioned above, the researchers focused on various facets of learner autonomy, with the investigation of independent responsibilities, capacities, and actions being a consistent theme. These studies yielded similar results: EFL students perceived autonomous learning favorably and participated in a variety of activities, albeit at varying degrees of engagement, with the goal of becoming self-sufficient learners. Nevertheless, despite their agreement on the significance of learner autonomy in language acquisition, Schreb-Buenner's

(2019) study found that the students' comprehension of the pertinent concepts was inadequate. Particularly, numerous previous studies proclaimed that most Asian learners still had traditional beliefs about teachers and their roles which affected the acceptance to take a role of self-organized learning (Cotteral, 1995). More specifically, both Nguyen's (2014) and Nguyen's (2011) researches (as cited in Nguyen, 2016) came to the similar conclusion that the majority of teacher participants did not think their students were capable of taking care of their learning. This result supported the findings of all the previously described studies, demonstrating a lack of consistency in opinions regarding the ability of Vietnamese students to act autonomously. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate what learner autonomy means to Vietnamese students in terms of its significance and degree of ability to act autonomously, as well as the autonomous learning activities they engage in whereby allowing for a deeper understanding of their ability to take charge of their education. This study looks into how the Dong Nai University EFL students perceive the value of learner autonomy in language learning, how capable they thought they were of acting autonomously, and how they engaged in both in-class and out-of-class autonomous activities. The following research questions were intended to be addressed by the study to achieve these research goals.

1) How do the Dong Nai University EFL students perceive the importance of learner autonomy in English language learning?

2) What are the students' perceptions of their abilities to learn language autonomously?

3) What language learning activities are they willing to practice?

3. Research methodology
3.1. Research design

This study employed a quantitative method by using a questionnaire to assess participants' attitudes toward the belief of the importance of autonomous learning, the perception of their learning ability relating to autonomous learning, and their behaviors in terms of readiness to practice language learning activities. According to Cohen et al. (2011), "a questionnaire is a useful instrument for gathering factual information, data on attitudes and preferences, beliefs and prediction, opinions, behavior, and experience-both in past and present time" (p. 90). The study was carried out within 6 weeks in the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024 at Dong Nai University. First, students who were selected for the study were sent an email with a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of three clusters with 20 items that measured three different components. Cluster 1 had 8 items investigating the students' perceptions of the importance of learner autonomy, and cluster 2 with 6 items examined participants' perceived abilities to be autonomous in their language learning. Six items of cluster 3 explored how often participants practiced some activities relating to autonomous learning. Cluster 1 and 2 were designed

on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, and 5-Strongly agree (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). For the items in cluster 3, a similar 5-point Likert scale pattern was used, with values ranging from 1 = "Never", 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Usually, 5 = "Always" (Spratt et al., 2002). Each questionnaire item's frequency (F), percentage (P), mean (M), and standard deviation (St.D.) are determined using SPSS. In terms of statistical data analysis, participant perceptions and practices of learner autonomy were measured using the Software Package of Statistics for the Social Science (SPSS, version 26) on the questionnaire responses. In particular, the sample T-test and the Descriptive Statistics Test were computed to examine the study's quantitative outcomes.

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined by computing Cronbach's alpha. Pallant (2013) states that a Cronbach's alpha of .70 or above indicates good findings. The Cronbach's Alpha of 20 Items in this research was relatively high (*a*=.819) as Table below, which suggested that all of the Items were sufficiently reliable for the research.

Table 1: *Reliability of the Items*

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.819	20

3.2. Participants

The number of participants in this study consisted of 80 fourth-year students majoring in English coming from the Foreign Language Faculty, Dong Nai University. Eighty students selected as the participants of the study came from 2 out of 4 English major classes that the researcher was assigned to teach in the academic year 2023-2024. This selection was purposive because this group of students was those who not only had long experience in learning language but were also prepared for school leaving, their participation would be more willing which helped the study reach validity and reliability.

Before conducting the study, the researcher made a survey to get information about participants' backgrounds information including gender, age, and time of learning English. The results of gender and age information of participants are depicted in demographic information as follows.

Table 2: *Demographic information of the participants*

Number		80	
	Male	36	45%
Gender	Female	44	55%
Age	21 years old	63	78,7%
	22 years old	17	21,3%
English learning time	11 years	63	78,7%
	> 11 years	17	21,3%

As seen in Table 2, gender proportions were not substantially dissimilar, particularly, 45% males and 55% females. Participants ranged in age

from 21 to 22, with age 21 accounting for a significantly higher rate than age 22. This indicates that most participants were within the appropriate age range for fourth-year university students.

4. Data analysis and discussions

The comments in the questionnaire prompted the participants' opinions and actions. The data from the questionnaire was analyzed by the researcher using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), version 26. A collection of techniques for statistical data analysis, known as SPSS, aids scientific researchers in processing their data for research in a variety of specialized sectors, including education. The data was collected and analyzed under three main sub-headings: (1) Students' perception of the importance of autonomous language learning, (2) Students' Perceptions of their Abilities regarding Autonomous English learning, and (3) Students' practices of activities relating to autonomous learning.

4.1. Data analysis

4.1.1. Students' perception of the importance of autonomous language learning

Each item in the first cluster, from item 1 to item 8, was examined using a Descriptive Statistics Test to determine the students' perception of the importance of autonomous language learning. Table 3 presents and analyzes the descriptive statistics pertaining to frequency, percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation.

Table 3: *Students' perception of the importance of autonomous language learning*

Item	Statements		SD 1	D 2	N 3	A 4	SA 5	M	Std. D
1	Learner autonomy offers me the flexibility to personalize my learning strategy	F(n)	0	2	8	38	32		
		P (%)	0	2.5	10.0	47.5	40.0	4.25	.735
2	Autonomous learning helps me develop a sense of responsibility and self-motivation	F (n)	0	0	6	52	22		
		P (%)	0	0	7.5	65.0	27.5	4.20	.564
3	Self-regulation allows me to become less reactive and more proactive in my learning	F (n)	0	2	10	44	24		
		P (%)	0	2.5	12.5	55.0	30.0	4.12	.709

			SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
4	Learning autonomy helps me make good use of my free time to study English.	**F (n)**	0	6	18	42	14	3.80	.823
		P (%)	0	7.5	22.5	52.5	17.5		
5	Learner autonomy offers learners the flexibility to personalize their learning strategy, self-evaluation techniques, schedule, and how they track their progress.	**F (n)**	0	4	14	44	18	3.95	.768
		P (%)	0	5.0	17.5	50.5	22.5		
6	Self-regulated learning can help me decide the type of classroom activities, such as individual, pair, and group work	**F (n)**	0	2	8	26	44	4.40	.778
		P (%)	0	2.5	10.0	32.5	55.0		
7	By self-regulated learning, I can decide the amount, type, and frequency of homework	**F (n)**		0	1	12	27	4.65	.533
		P (%)		0	2.5	30.0	67.5		
8	Independent learning motivates learners to achieve their educational goals	**F (n)**		0	7	18	15	4.20	.723
		P (%)		0	17.5	45.0	37.5		

(SD: Strongly disagreem, D: Disagree, N: Neutral, A: Agree, SA: Strongly agree)

Table 3 displays the mean score of 4.25 and the standard deviation of 0.735 for Item 1. This indicated that the students had a favorable opinion of the significance of independent learning. The percentages of strong agreement (16%) and agreement (19%) likewise support the positiveness of the importance of autonomous language learning. Based on these statistics, which represent 87.5% of the total, it can be concluded that most students are motivated by autonomous learning. Noticeably, there were only two students who disagreed with the content of item 1, aside from the eight who gave neutral responses.

Besides, throughout the rest items (2 to 8), Table 3 pointed out that all values of Mean were in the degree of positive attitude (all Means are higher than 3.5). Interestingly, the item "*By*

self-regulated learning, I can decide the amount, type, and frequency of homework" accounted for the highest score of 4,65. Surprisingly, just a small percentage (16 out of 640 responses for disagreement and none for strongly agreed) did not perceive the value of autonomous learning. In short, it can be concluded that overwhelming participants expressed their positive beliefs about the importance of autonomous language learning.

4.1.2. Students' perceptions of their abilities regarding autonomous English learning

The second group of questionnaire statements was designed with the aim of obtaining information considering students' perceptions of their abilities regarding autonomous learning. This group comprising 6 questions (9-14) was statistically analyzed and presented as follows.

Table 4: *Students' perception of their abilities regarding autonomous English learning*

Item	Statements		SD 1	D 2	U 3	A 4	SA 5	M	Std. D
9	I initiatively take part in discussions with classmates during English	F(n)		2	4	36	38	4.37	.702
		P (%)		2.5	5.0	45.0	47.5		
10	I try to solve the questions by getting information from resources on the Internet/media	F (n)	0	2	24	54		4.65	.533
		P (%)	0	2.5	30.0	67.5			
11	I can identify my English strengths	F (n)	2	12	34	32		4.20	.781
		P (%)	2.5	15.0	42.5	40.0			
12	I can take the initiative to set goals, create plans, select skills and methods to be used, monitor the procedure of acquisition properly, and evaluate what I have learned.	F (n)		0	10	40	30	4.25	.670
		P (%)			12.5	50.0	37.5		
13	I have the initiative to look for other resources besides textbooks for English learning	F (n)		0	22	24	34	4.15	.813
		P (%)			27.5	30,0	42.5		
14	In case of no guidance from my teacher, I could learn on my own initiative.	F (n)		0	16	48	16	4.00	.641
		P (%)			20.0	60.0	20.0		

(SD: Strongly disagree, D: Disagree,N: Neutral, A: Agree, SA: Strongly agree)

As seen in Table 4, item 9 has a mean value of 4.37, and SD. of 0.702 with 36 students (45%) agreeing and 38 (47.5%) strongly agreeing that they initiated taking part in discussing with classmates during English lessons. Remarkably, except for 4 participants (5%) holding a neutral opinion, a significantly low rate showed their negative point of view in terms of disagreement and strong disagreement on this kind of perception. Concerning the use of resources on the Internet and other media to solve problems, the finding of item 10 showed that a high proportion of students did use this media as a resource for seeking information to answer questions (M=4.65, SD=0.533). This result illustrated that students had the potential to learn independently. Next, Items 11 and 12 showed that 34 and 40 participants responded in agreement on their ability to identify their English strengths and take the initiative to set goals, create plans select skills and methods to be used, monitor the procedure of acquisition properly, and evaluate what they have learned. In fact, initiative learning is one of the abilities in autonomous learning characteristics.

Therefore, these findings helped to show that students did have the ability to learn language autonomously. Specifically, in terms of learning initiative, the two last items 13, and 14 pointed out that no responses showed disagreement in initiating looking for other resources besides textbooks or teachers. Except for 32 students (20%) who gave neutral opinions, the rest agreed that they have the capacity and willingness to support learning resources themselves.

In short, all the findings in Table 4 showed that overwhelming students showed their ability to autonomous learning of English through their activities in the initiating process.

4.1.3. Students' practices of activities relating to autonomous learning

The information on the frequency of learner autonomy practices of the participants was collected by using the 06 items in the third cluster of the questionnaire. Table 5 below displayed the descriptive statistics of the responses from the participants about the willingness of practices they used to do activities relating to autonomous learning.

Table 5: *Students' Autonomous Language Learning Activities*

Items	Statements		N	S	So	U	A	M	Std. D
			1	2	3	4	5		
15	Attending English courses and seminars provided by the university	**F(n)**		4	14	20	46	4.30	.830
		P (%)		5.0	17.5	25.0	57.5		
16	Meeting with your teacher to discuss your work in English	**F (n)**			10	32	38	4.35	.700
		P (%)			12.5	40.0	47.5		

#	Description		N	S	So	U	A	Mean	SD
17	Practicing English in an English Conversation School	F (n)			20	28	32	4.15	.789
		P (%)			25.0	35.0	40.0		
18	Practicing speaking English with your friends and foreigners	F (n)			6	42	32	4.32	.616
		P (%)			7.5	52.5	40.0		
19	Not reading magazines and books in English	F (n)	32	36	12			1.75	.660
		P (%)	40.0	45.0	15.0				
20	Keeping a diary in English	F (n)			14	36	30	4.20	.723
		P (%)			17.5	45.0	37.5		

(N = Never, S = Seldom, So = Sometimes, U = Usually, A = Always)

According to data from Table 5, which displays how frequently students practice accomplishing tasks related to autonomous learning, on Item 15, the majority of students indicated that they always attend the university's English courses and seminars (M=4.30, SD.=0.830), with 46 students, or 57.5% of the total, and 25% usually did the same activities. Surprisingly, just 5% of students indicated seldom, and 0% indicated never at all.

Moving on to Item 16, the vast majority of participants preferred to meet with their teacher to go over their English work. In particular, 47% always and 40% typically engaged in this type of learning activity (M=4.15, SD.=0.70). Just 5 participants occasionally discussed their work in English with teachers; moreover, none of the students indicated that they did so infrequently or never. Similarly, in Item 17, 40% and 30% of the participants rated practicing English in an English Conversation School as exciting (M=4.15, SD.=0.789). Only 13 participants expressed an opinion of sometimes, with no responses indicating seldom or never. For Item 18, descriptive statistics showed that a sizable percentage practiced speaking English with friends and visitors from other countries (M=4.32, SD=0.616). In particular, just 3 individuals expressed a sometimes point of view, and none expressed a seldom or never point of view; 52.5% generally and 40.0% always. Regarding Item 19, nearly no participants reported not reading magazines and books in English (M=1.75, SD=0.660). In detail, except for 12 students (15%) responded they sometimes read English materials, and the rest showed they were against not reading books and other kinds of printed documents (0% for never and seldom). This finding showed that nearly all EFL students independently pick up English through frequent reading of English-language content.

The final item indicated that approximately 82.5% of participants kept a diary in English very often (M=4.20, SD0.723). Only 17.5% (14 participants) expressed their occasionally doing this habit while there was no response to the scale of

seldom and never. This result supported the idea that a relative proportion of EFL students were willing to learn language through writing diaries as an autonomous learning activity.

4.2. Discussions

The study's findings demonstrated that the students believed autonomy played a significant role in their acquisition of the target language. This finding aligned with earlier studies (Le, 2018; Truong et al., 2019), which found that learners' autonomy was regarded as "important" by EFL students in their English learning process. This is seen as a beneficial circumstance that might support teachers' efforts and convictions in helping students learn language autonomously. Stated differently, the belief on the importance of learning autonomy of English majors for independently learning in the language might serve as a strong incentive for students to dedicate sufficient time and effort to their language learning. Regarding the self-perception of EFL students' autonomous learning ability, the findings indicated that they thought their abilities were above average. This conclusion is somewhat consistent with studies conducted by Razeq (2014); Yildirim (2008); Truong et al.'s (2019). However, the findings of this study place a greater emphasis on initiative compared to Truong (2019)'s. Therefore, the findings of this study were seen to reach the ability of autonomous English learning. For students' practices of activities relating to autonomous learning, the findings of this investigation were consistent with those of Duong's (2001) study, which

indicated that students' overall practice levels for autonomous assignments were somewhat above average. However, Duong (2001) focused on both inside and outside of the classroom, but the activities mentioned in this study were primarily outside of the classroom. As a result, this study's findings still do not adequately capture students' practice learning activities autonomously.

Overal assessment on the level from students' perception of the importance of autonomous learning to the ability to learn autonomously, and finally to practice learning activities related to autonomous learning, it can be concluded that while the students believed that learner autonomy was crucial to their language learning, their assessments of their own talents in relation to autonomous activities were on a medium. This also holds true for their degree of autonomous learning practice, indicating that this study found a discrepancy between participants' views and actual autonomous learning practices. This disparity is most likely a result of the influence of the conventional educational techniques they were exposed to in the past. They were not given the freedom to choose what to learn and how to complete learning activities in the majority of traditional classes. Additionally, they were not permitted to select the course materials or evaluation formats. Students' learning process was heavily dependent on their lecturers. Therefore, there should be more opportunities provided for students to develop their capacity for learning control.

5. Conclusion

Since learner autonomy is seen as a critical component of a successful learner, it is recognized that it plays a significant part in the process of learning the English language. For this reason, having a high degree of learner autonomy is ideal for all students, especially in the setting of higher education. However, the study's findings demonstrated that, despite their awareness of the value of implementing learner autonomy to improve language acquisition, EFL students' implementation of autonomous learning was insufficient. Drawing on the empirical evidence, it could be concluded that students can be more autonomous when they are exposed to a learning environment that requires them to do so, with appropriate support or intervention (Ming, 2009). Therefore, it is advised that autonomous learning should be included in EFL curricula in Vietnam and that students be given as many opportunities as possible to engage in autonomous learning. There are a few more limitations on this study that need to be taken into account. First, if the study had been carried out on a bigger scale and with a more comprehensive random sample approach, the results might have been more robust in terms of participant proportion and random sampling. Secondly, the time restriction is another noteworthy drawback. As a result, several elements were impacted, including participant access, data collecting, and data analysis processes. Thirdly, the research design ought to employ a quantitative approach in order to facilitate the acquisition of a comprehensive understanding of the specific topic being studied (Creswell, 2014; Fraenkel, et al., 2012). Thus, rather than relying just on qualitative methods, the research design of this study ought to have employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Finally, in terms of context, as this investigation mainly emphasized outside class activities, it can be concluded that there was not enough information in the data to provide a thorough evaluation of the practice of activities related to autonomous learning.

Despite certain limitations, this study aims to illuminate students' needs in learner autonomy while providing supporting evidence for the efficacy of autonomous learning in English language teaching pedagogy. Its intention is to assist teachers in recognizing shifts in students' conceptions and habits related to learning styles. To successfully implement this approach, it is recommended that students should be given as many opportunities as possible to engage in autonomous learning and that autonomous learning be incorporated into EFL courses. Specifically, after reading this paper on autonomous learning, EFL lecturers of DNU will profit from this approach to improve students' practice of activities related to autonomous learning. Ultimately, the purpose of this study is to serve as a helpful reference for future researchers who wish to go deeper into the subject of English teaching and learning.

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KHẢO SÁT VỀ TÍNH TỰ CHỦ CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN ANH TRONG HỌC TẬP TIẾNG ANH TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC ĐỒNG NAI

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TÓM TẮT

Khái niệm về quyền tự chủ của người học đã thu hút nhiều quan tâm trong dạy và học ngôn ngữ trong hai thập kỷ qua (Little, 1991). Nhiều nghiên cứu về thái độ và hành vi của người học liên quan đến tính tự chủ của người học đã được thực hiện ở Việt Nam, nơi mà khái niệm về tính tự chủ của người học đang nhận được nhiều sự quan tâm. Tuy nhiên, những nghiên cứu về cách sinh viên chuyên tiếng Anh hiểu và sử dụng phương pháp học tập tự chủ vẫn còn hạn chế, đặc biệt là trong bối cảnh xu hướng giáo dục lấy người học làm trung tâm hiện nay. Để giúp thu hẹp khoảng cách nói trên, nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích báo cáo một cuộc điều tra nhận thức của sinh viên về tầm quan trọng của học tự chủ, khả năng của mình về học tự chủ và thực hành hoạt động học tập tự chủ của sinh viên chuyên Anh tại Trường Đại học Đồng Nai. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện trong 6 tuần vào học kỳ I năm học 2023-2024 tại Trường Đại học Đồng Nai. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp định lượng bằng cách sử dụng bảng câu hỏi để thu thập dữ liệu từ 80 sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh. Ngoài ra, Gói phần mềm Thống kê Khoa học Xã hội đã được sử dụng để phân tích dữ liệu. Kết quả cho thấy: Sinh viên đồng ý về tầm quan trọng trong tự chủ của người học đối với việc học ngôn ngữ. Sinh viên có thể thực hành hoạt động học một cách tự chủ nhưng chỉ ở mức trên trung bình. Kết quả này khớp với dữ liệu trên thang tần suất về các hoạt động tự chủ được các sinh viên tự báo cáo. Kết quả nghiên cứu này là cơ sở để thực hiện lồng ghép phương pháp tự chủ của người học vào việc dạy và học tiếng Anh bằng cách đưa nó trở thành một phần quan trọng trong chương trình giảng dạy tiếng Anh nhằm nâng cao tính tự chủ của người học trong việc dạy - học tiếng Anh. Ngoài ra, bài viết này có thể được sử dụng làm tài liệu tham khảo cho các giảng viên tiếng Anh tại Trường Đại học đồng Nai và các trường khác quan tâm đến phương pháp người học tự chủ trong học tập tiếng Anh.

Từ khóa*: Năng lực, tự chủ, tự chủ của người học, nhận thức, thực hành*