

Autonomous Learning among EFL Undergraduate Students in Selected Private Indonesian Islamic University: Voices and Activities

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ABSTRACT

Learner autonomy has recently been recognised as an essential component of changes in higher education. The word 'LA' can be misunderstood because it may be viewed differently in various settings. Hence, this study explores whether the students at higher levels of education in Indonesia have better perceptions and efforts to enhance their autonomous learning. Questionnaires and interviews were asked with EFL students in collecting the data. The study sample consisted of 95 students randomly selected from FTTE Islamic University of Riau. This study applied a mix-method, and descriptive statistical testing was employed to analyse the data and determine the research questions. NVivo 12 explored how the students perceived the autonomous learning process. The result showed that the EFL learners mostly perceive autonomous learning as independent learning under one's target, involving personal learning styles and strategies with the teacher's assistance. A significance value (p) was obtained at the time of initiation, monitoring, and evaluation of the data, respectively 0.286; 0.533; 0.744. So, all the p-value was >0.05. It requires no significant effort in initiating, monitoring, and evaluating among different levels. In addition, there was no significant difference between the efforts of the initiating, monitoring, and evaluating activity performed among EFL learners either in the second, fourth, or sixth level. This point is that EFL learners are not independent in selecting when and how to initiate, monitor, and evaluate autonomous learning. So, this fact shows us that the higher semester level did not guarantee better effort toward autonomous learning activities.



1. Introduction

In autonomous learning in English education today, EFL student-teachers are faced with the task of designing and introducing new teaching methods and interventions that can successfully strengthen students' autonomous learning ability. Being an autonomous learner is becoming someone capable of taking charge of their learning (Yim & Chuk, 2004). Concerning English as a foreign language taught in Indonesia, autonomous learning raises some issues about the effort of students' understanding and the activities teachers partake in to engage in this process (Khotimah et al., 2019). It also involves learner autonomy perceived by school teachers (Lengkanawati, 2017) and investigating how project-based learning is promoted in EFL classrooms (Yuliani & Lengkanawati, 2017). Thus, autonomous understanding of learning and its activities from

students' point of view becomes crucial to help students' effectiveness in learning EFL. It involves having and holding the responsibility for the decisions concerning all aspects of learning that cover management tasks (Murphy, 2007; Scharle & Szabó, 2000) and setting up learning objectives. Also, it entails determining the contents (Kemala, 2016) and progression (Benson, 2003), selecting a method of learning (Dimitrios, 2000), monitoring progress, and evaluating what has been learned (Dang, 2012b). To be an English language user, individuals must be equipped with technical knowledge and skills, interact or collaborate with others, and make decisions (Dickinson et al., 1993; Nunan, 1980). They should also be responsible for their learning or become autonomous learners (Tayjasanant & Suraratdecha, 2016) and be provided with suitable study environments (Lüftenegger et al., 2012).

All the aforementioned studies did not reflect a clear description of autonomous learning from the student's viewpoint. Many learners still need guidance on selecting and using self-regulatory strategies to assist their language learning processes (Cirocki et al., 2019; Csizér & Kormos, 2014) and are less responsible and capable of choosing the appropriate materials and activities (Jafari et al., 2017a). Also, learners prefer self-paced instructions in conventional classrooms (Yaroslavova & Kolegora, 2020). There is poor empirical support, especially in autonomous learning activities perceived by EFL learners, in initiating, monitoring, and evaluating to promote effective learning (Benson, 2013). Hence, EFL student-teachers must become well-known and more conscious of the criteria of successful, efficient, and effective learners, and building positive academic behaviour is also a learning goal (Little, 2007). It is based on the notion that language learners develop their skills individually, which is why EFL students work hard to achieve their aims individually and prove that persons with different backgrounds have apparent varying perspectives. (Jameelah, 2020). The importance of the current study lies in the fact that the participants were student-teachers planning to become English language instructors. Hence, they must understand how autonomous learning performs and practice inside the classroom precisely.

Therefore, to fill this void, this study seeks to depict autonomous learning perspectives and perform among EFL undergraduate students because they are a key strategy for higher education reforms. The purposes were twofold: exploring the autonomous learning perceived among EFL students and what activities they have performed to encourage the awareness of decision-making in the autonomous learning process from a different level. To address this aim, the present study tries to answer the following questions:

- a) What is autonomous learning perceived by the EFL learners?
- b) Is there a statistically significant difference between initiating, monitoring, and evaluating activity performed among EFL learners?

By answering these questions, the study will give more information about student's perception of a key higher education reform.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Autonomous learning and Autonomous learning process

First, the autonomous learning terminology needs to be discussed. It is a concept focusing on the learner's capacity to reflect and take responsibility for his learning process (Benson, 2008; Lamb, 2008; Little, 2017; Murphy, 2007; Smith, 2008). The

concept is also associated with adult education (Little, 2007) and is supported by government regulation (Pemerintah, 2010), which states that "education has created an independent person." Independence or autonomy is one of the eighteen values of Indonesian character in education that is expected to be formed during the education period (MoEC, 2011). There are several studies about promoting learner autonomy at different levels of foreign language education in various institutions and universities, alongside many new approaches and innovations for developing it (Luke & Dooley, 2015; Nasri et al., 2017). Experts have recently explored teachers' and students' beliefs about learner autonomy (LA) in different countries, such as Turkey, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Vietnam, Thailand, and Persia (Abdel Razeq, 2014; Alzebaree & Yavuz, 2016; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a; Jafari et al., 2017b; Mısırlı et al., 2018; My Duong, 2014; Wichayathian & Reinders, 2018). Although these studies indicate a trend in language teaching concepts, the most examined research also showed that it is perceived positively in an EFL setting with some constraints, such as school and facilities (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012b; Cakici, 2017; Lengkanawati, 2017). However, related to autonomous learning can be misunderstood because it can be perceived differently in various settings (Jameelah, 2020; Phan, 2013a). Here, the learning setting has determined the changing in students' perceptions. Therefore, more information was uncovered from the student's perceptions since they have recently been recognised as a key higher education reform strategy.

2.1. Autonomous learners' characteristics

Autonomous learners are characterised by some attributes, including understanding what is being taught, having personal learning goals, and being capable of choosing, evaluating, and monitoring their learning. Scharle & Szabó (2000) stated that autonomous learners possess several characteristics, such as accepting that their efforts are crucial to progress in learning and behaving accordingly. It also entails the willingness to cooperate with the teacher and others, consciously monitor their progress, and strive to use available opportunities to their benefit, including classroom activities and homework. Kocak (2003) characterised autonomous learners as those who accept the responsibility of their learning and share in setting related goals. They also take the initiative in planning and executing learning activities and regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of their learning. Next, Kemala (2016) stated that autonomous learners are characterised by the ability to find resources or materials needed for learning, identify their needs, and select projects. From the above characteristics, (Dang, 2012a) gave three categorisations of learner autonomy attributes: initiating, monitoring, and evaluating. The initiating learning process concerns understanding personal

preferences, setting goals, preparing study plans, and creating opportunities. Meanwhile, monitoring includes attributes related to learning engagement and maintenance, such as selecting appropriate strategies, modifying learning paths, and negotiating with others. The evaluating process anticipates attributes of reviewing learning outcomes, such as proofreading an assignment and appraising a piece of writing.

Although some researchers have different attributes of learner autonomy, they agreed on one factor: the learner is capable of taking control and responsibility for their learning. Through these processes, the autonomous learner eventually establishes a personal agenda for learning (Chan, 2010; Reinders & Balçikanli, 2011) by setting up directions in the planning, pacing, monitoring, and evaluating the learning process. Therefore, becoming an autonomous learner means that one needs to start with themselves by reflecting on their beliefs, practices, experiences, and expectations of the learning situation.

3. Method

The study builds on a mix-method research design to explore the views of students on autonomous learning and the activities they perform to encourage their decision-making capacity in learning at different levels from levels two, four, and six. Questionnaires and interviews were the research tools contextualised for the students of a regional university in Sumatra. Meanwhile, four EFL students by random sampling were interviewed in-depth to obtain more data from the survey.

A questionnaire adapted from Khotimah et al. (2019) was employed since it has the same purpose to explore the EFL learners' perceived autonomous learning and how the initiating, monitoring, and evaluating efforts were when studying in or out of classrooms. It was divided into four parts: definition, initiating, monitoring, and evaluating (16 items) (see Appendix A). One was to evaluate the definition of autonomous learning known and involved responding to a checklist from the options provided. Special for definition, the participant only selects or gives the checklist on one of three options. Meanwhile, five items entailed assessing the initiation of activities, seven items were about monitoring, and three concerned evaluating activities which had been attempted during learning in

the EFL context. The fifteen items used a four-point Likert scale from 1 for "never" to 4 for "often." Here, the questionnaire data were analysed using SPSS Version 21.0, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

A detailed interview included exploring the activities of EFL students to enhance the autonomous learning of students in the classroom and encompassed initiation, monitoring, and evaluation processes. Besides the pre-designed questions, the interviews were semi-structured, and emerging themes were explored. These themes were one-to-one, lasted approximately forty (40) minutes, and were conducted by the authors in September 2019 for five participants, involving four learners as the active respondents and one teacher (T). The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and thematically analysed, and the researcher employed NVivo 12 to work on both tools. There were four steps in analysing the data: (1) coding, (2) classifying the coding, (3) matrix coding, and (4) summary. For coding, the author uses symbols A, B, C, and D as representative active students' samples, while the numbers (1, 2, and 3) represent the items. Meanwhile, the conceptual framework of this analysis was based on studies by some experts (Benson, 2012; Dang, 2012b; Dickinson et al., 1993; Little & Dam, 1998; Orawiwanakul & Wichadee, 2017), and the main themes were discussed and validated to ensure transparency and consistency. All the participants signed an agreement outlining the objectives of the study and gave oral permission to record their interviews. Anonymity and confidentiality were applied throughout the study, and the interviews were held in an interactional and friendly way.

4. Results

4.1. The EFL learners' voices on Autonomous Learning

The results related to the EFL learners' voices about autonomous learning definition on the questionnaire were varied because the participants were required to select a definition from the three choices. The following definition was the most precise produced so far.

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics of the student's perception of Autonomous learning

A	Definition	Total	N	%
1.	Independence in learning English is studying without the help of a teacher.	95	10	11
2.	Independence in learning English is a condition in which students are responsible for the implementation of English learning, and teachers are responsible for the planning and assessment phases.	95	36	37
3.	Independence in learning English is a condition in which, apart from receiving guidance from the teacher, students are also responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating English learning.	95	59	62

In conformity with table 4.1, there are 37% of the participants claimed that autonomous learning meant that students focused solely on the learning process without being responsible for initiating and evaluating activities. This result supports Cirocki et al.'s (2019) research that Indonesian students had a minimal understanding of the learner's autonomy and described it as a learner's ability to function independently of the teacher. However, 62% out of 95 persons chose the third definition, the definition that autonomous learning meant the students set their goals and regulations by themselves to achieve their target but require guidance from the lecturer because they cannot work alone. Unfortunately, what students mean about set regulation is different from what the teacher set. The students focus on the regulation of tasks or projects but not the regulation of the general learning process. Hence, guidance from the lecturer is still an essential consideration in promoting autonomy for them. This definition helped distinguish between autonomous learning in Europe and Asia (Thi & Phan, 2012), where the European learners felt that thinking and making decisions are abilities that learners in classrooms should have, besides the writing skill.

The remaining ten students admitted that autonomous learning was about being responsible for the learning process without the teacher's help. This definition corresponds with the explanation by Hafner & Miller (2011) that the concept of learner autonomy is often mistakenly defined merely as independent out-of-class learning in which learners are in control of all aspects of their learning process. It also supports the study by Phan (2015), which discovered that although learner autonomy has recently been identified as a key strategy for higher education reforms, there exists a potential for misunderstanding of the term, given that it can be interpreted differently in diverse settings. Research also defined it as taking responsibility for one's learning and actively seeking out new

knowledge. It argued that autonomy requires specific metacognitive knowledge regarding one's self as a learner, the subject matter to be learned, and the context so that the processes become urgent for long-life learning (Sinclair & Thang, 2009).

Subsequently, this study observes how EFL learners in different levels or semesters depict their autonomous learning activities when initiating, monitoring, as well as evaluating, and whether any differences among them exist. Before interpreting the result, normality and homogeneity assumption tests were conducted. Based on the normality test outcomes using the Kolmogorov Smirnov results in Appendix B (Table 1), it can be seen that the planning, monitoring, and assessment data were significant at > 0.05 . Therefore, the data for initiating, monitoring, and assessment can be concluded as normally distributed.

Meanwhile, based on the homogeneity test in Table 2 (see Appendix 2), it can be seen that all the initiating, monitoring, and assessment variables, which had a value of $> 5\%$ alpha ($p > 0.05$), consequently had homogeneous variations.

4.2. Autonomous Learning Activities among EFL Learners

Based on the descriptive analysis data, it mentioned that the average value of the initiating aspect for levels 2, 4, and 6 were 2.98, 2.78, and 2.86, respectively. Meanwhile, the SD was 0.513 each for semesters 2 and 4 and 0.469 for levels 6. The monitoring aspect achieved by the EFL learners in levels 2, 4, and 6 generated average values of 3, 2.91, and 2.85, with SD of 0.502, 0.582, and 0.554, respectively. Conversely, the evaluation aspect for semesters 2, 4, and 6 produced average values of 2.77, 2.68, and 2.78, with successively SD as follows 0.595, 0.684, and 0.494 (see Graph 1). The descriptive analysis results can be seen in Appendix B (Table 3).

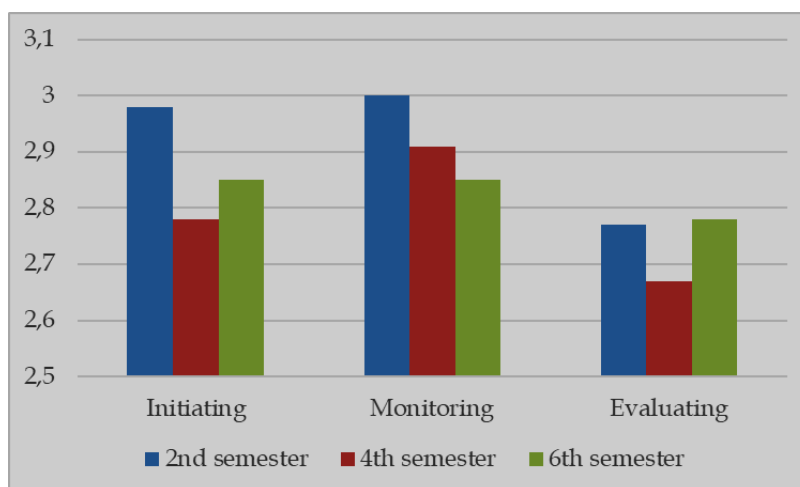


Figure 4.1. Learners' autonomous learning proces

Figure 4.1 reveals that the degree of initiative is most significant at the beginning of the semester (2.98) relative to semester 4 (2.78), but it has risen again in semester 6. (2.85). The higher score interventions in semester two were reinforced by the fact that the learning process in semester two was packed with internal student excitement, as well as the importance of lecturers as a reasonably strong motivator, according to interviews with respondents. The data interview showed that discussion and stimuli are classified into initiative activity which is described by Students C and D. When T gave questions as the opening class, then;

“she wants us the response one by one”, and
“reminds us to find other material.”

[C1 and D1]

The student's participation in the discussion offered by the teacher at each meeting, either at the beginning of the lecture or in the middle of the subject presentation, is beneficial. It often promoted the learners to prepare additional material to support the subject of the day and sharpened their spontaneity in making arguments in a class discussion.

Participant T claimed that there were many ways by which a lecturer can inspire students to learn independently. First, provide students with encouragement about the value of independent learning activities. After suggesting that the classroom exercises are not optimal enough to help them master English, the students must have the initiative to learn individually. Performing this activity according to their version in several fun ways will enable the language acquisition process to be better achieved.

Second, give examples of the value of possible independent learning tasks and ways of performing them individually to achieve maximum performance. This approach was communicated based on personal experience to help the students easily apply the examples provided. For example, they were advised to listen to songs or news or watch cartoons or YouTube content in English as a widespread practice to develop their listening skills. These activities were encouraged to be performed regularly during their free time and with discipline. Additionally, the learners were reminded to assess the best time for independent study. Third, tasks that develop the imagination were provided to help students learn independently. One example of such tasks, which involved making a presentation in English, was, in reality, indirectly meant to inspire the students to practice speaking the language to do the job better and required them to engage in learning activities. Hence, this task encouraged independence through active practising. Fourth, feedback on the assignments was provided to inspire the students to study independently at all times and continue enhancing the quality of their learning outcomes. Here, they were open to the feeling that they would have the same ability to share their ideas.

Unfortunately, student engagement is based solely on class discussions and little involvement in-process monitoring, such as attendance percentage, tasks, and midterm tests, excluding the final evaluation.

They openly asked questions or were otherwise probed by lecturers and colleagues when the opportunity to share their ideas was offered. These questions somehow became a stimulus to enhance the learners thinking. Students C and D admitted:

“One of the stimuli needed by learners is a simulation. Students get more inspired with simulation and try imitating to discover more about it as well. Also, everything that can initiate learning becomes a separate stimulus for them, whether from the way the lecturer opens, describes, offers guidance, or the learning strategy provided.”

[C2 and D2]

The lectures' simulations encouraged active engagement and interaction of the students to allow ideas to be communicated. Sadly, it was limited by the student's English fluency, as some still felt anxious and were afraid of making mistakes. Although several students felt nervous about speaking and lacked confidence because of the full use of English, they knowingly suggested that using it entirely would make them more fluent in the language of the future.

For the monitoring process, EFL students in the second semester have 0.09 points greater than students in the fourth semester, and students in the sixth semester have 0.06 points less than students in the fourth semester. Students in semester 4 argue that they are more reserved during lectures and do more community work than individual work this semester. However, students in the sixth semester confessed to working more monotonously due to the many individual tasks and projects that needed to be accomplished.

Further, the students stated that they did not want to be overlooked, even though the lecturer still played a role in supervising them by providing specific guidelines or directions. This behaviour resulted in confusion and the inability to implement some tasks, especially for students A and B. Nevertheless, C and D stated that they did not prefer direction when resuming tasks, as the guidance restricted and led them to copy a pattern, produce monotonous outcomes, and prevent them from freely conveying what they understood.

Furthermore, EFL learners preferred individual assignments to group tasks, as they found it easier to determine when and how and obtain fair outcomes or results for the individual work. Conversely, the final evaluation and distribution of the group work tended to be less fair to the students, according to participants A, B, C, and D. The lecturer exposed a similar idea that the method of monitoring the learners to encourage independence was by giving routine assignments, projects, and regular feedback. It

supports the claims of previous studies by (Kocak, 2003; Sönmez, 2016) that monitoring the progress of learners could be done by available opportunities, including classroom activities and homework. Here, the lecturer admitted several ways, of which the first was assigning routine assignments.

“I always give assignments weekly to the students about the material that has been or will be learned. This assignment may be a task I will say they must do, such as summarising the material that has been done or looking for additional references related to the material to be discussed. Through these methods, I indirectly stimulate students to study independently, and then I will monitor by requesting feedback on the assignments that I gave.”

[A3, B3, C3, and D3]

Second, feedback on the tasks given regularly is provided, and the lecturer commented:

“I do this by asking questions at the beginning of class activities and I ask some students to express their ideas related to the assignments that I gave. To motivate students to express their ideas, I conduct a reward and punishment system.”

[T3]

This evidence supports the study results by Jameelah (2020) that providing feedback and self-assessment resources for learners can enormously help their autonomous abilities for learning in FL learning.

For the evaluation process, we can see on the graph that the scores for semester 2 (2.78) and semester 6 (2.77) are just 0.1 apart, implying that semesters 2 and 6 have similar supportive views. Yet, the score for semester 4 (2.67) is 0.11 points less than theirs. Being at the same point, they are still in the progress of learning about approach and evaluation concepts in an EFL setting.

From the data interview, it can be reported that to allow the learners to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy, the improvement, and the outcome of their learning, they admitted that receiving a detailed procedure for every task was helpful. Students A, B, C, and D also stated that they obtained feedback about the assignments from the lecturer and considered their achievements.

On the whole, the initiating, monitoring, and evaluation had normal and homogeneous data aspects; the ANOVA test was used then. The ANOVA test state that the sig. between-group for initiating process is $.286 > 0.05$, the sig. between-group in the monitoring process is $.533 > 0.05$, and the sig. between-group in evaluating is $.744 > 0.05$. This statistics data answers the second question: there is no significant difference in initiating, monitoring, and evaluating performed by levels 2, 4, and 6 (see Appendix B table 4).

5. Discussion

The exposition below was the deepen explanation of the result in points 4.1 and 4.2 that paragraphing based on each result.

5.1. The EFL Learners' Voices of Autonomous Learning

It is mentioned in the above studies was also supported by the interview where the EFL learners defined the term. According to students A and B, autonomous learning is independent learning under one's target, using personal learning styles and strategies with the teacher's guidance. This matter is in line with Hafner & Miller (2011) study that the concept of learner autonomy is often mistakenly defined merely as independent out-of-class learning in which learners are in control of all aspects of their learning process. Another participant, C, noted that it is about how students independently solve their learning problems. In contrast, student D claimed that the term involves the dependence of one's learning on their awareness only. It shows that students had not defined autonomous learning properly and practically. These findings are also supported by (Hidayat et al., 2020) and Rokhani (2013), who found that many students who enter higher educational institutions still depend on teachers. Therefore, students lack autonomy in their learning or are less capable of autonomous learning and have not sufficiently prepared for the challenge of autonomous learning at university. Meanwhile, teachers perceive autonomous learning defined the term as a learning activity performed by someone motivated to learn based on their knowledge of the value of learning. Additionally, the teacher said autonomous learning practices are typically executed outside of structured activities and appear to be performed by students in areas where they feel comfortable learning. Such a situation could involve a visual learner who would prefer to study independently by viewing YouTube videos in places with excellent internet access or watching TV at home to improve their comprehension.

In conclusion, all the definitions focused on how students learn to possess knowledge initially and gave tiny portions on monitoring and evaluating what they have. Here, the study opens the mind to the actual concept of the term for all respondents. The concept is that it involves one's learning, as well as awareness, which covers all stages of learning, starting from planning the goal to monitoring and reflection during the period. It is in line with Jafari (et al., 2017b) that the teacher's assistance is only a sign, while the decision is on the learners themselves.

5.2. Autonomous Learning Activities among EFL Learners

Based on Table 4 (see Appendix B), it can be seen that a significance value (p) of 0.286 was obtained at

the time of initiation of the data. The p-value was >0.05 , meaning that there was no significant difference between the effort of the initiating activities performed among EFL learners either in the second, fourth, or sixth level. They had almost the same effort towards understanding the course outline, having personal learning goals, acting systematically, and looking for references and activities that encouraged the learning. It is supported by Dang (2012a) that initiating the learning process involves attributes related to understanding personal learning preferences, setting goals, preparing study plans, and creating learning opportunities. Generally, the efforts made by the second-level of EFL learners and the fourth-level in initiating phases, such as understanding the objectives of learning English in class and having personal learning goals besides these objectives, were similar.

Both groups also had systematic time and activities for learning English, looked for additional learning resources besides those obtained from the class, and searched for new activities in the language, apart from studying, at SD 0.51. Conversely, the sixth-level EFL learners' efforts regarding understanding the learning objectives in class and having personal lessons besides these objectives produced SD 0.46. These activities, which also entailed planning time and exercises for learning, looking for additional resources, and seeking new activities in English, apart from studying in the class, were better. Consequently, this result revealed that they were starting to be careful about study objectives, planning, seeking additional referrals, and other activities. These other activities include developing their potential by joining a study club or students' community or being private home-to-home tutors. The result of the interview with the respondents supported the questionnaire data. The students were asked to confirm whether the lecturer's explanation of the lesson's goals helped improve their autonomy. They replied that it helped and supported them in preparing the material, as the lecturer provided the course outline or lesson's objectives. Students A and B said that recognising was helpful and served as a guide to support current topics. With the outline, they were often encouraged to decide on personal goals and complete assignments for courses, such as performing individual presentations. Furthermore, the students could better prepare themselves to fulfil the tasks assigned by the instructor. Explanations of the course description activity also help improve self-motivation to be more prepared for subsequent class meetings. The students can prepare what activities they can to encourage themselves and look for references to improve their knowledge about the topic.

To sum up, learning goal and their support, good model, tasks, feedback, and simulation are needed to raise their autonomy in EFL class. The gap lies in the frequency of teachers giving it during the learning and the level of difficulties.

5.3. The EFL Learners' Monitoring Activities

At this stage, autonomous learning covers activities such as knowing the appropriate strategies or methods for learning English, choosing the material according to individual abilities, and trying to improve skills in the language. It also entailed performing the prepared language learning plan, concentrating on learning English, and learning and interacting with friends, seniors, teachers, and native English speakers. Table 3 also indicated that a significance value (p) of 0.533 was obtained from the data monitoring process. Because the p-value is >0.05 , it can be stated that there was no significant difference among the levels. Although the second-level EFL learners had the highest mean scores among the students, at 3.00, 2.91, 2.85, the highest std. of 0.501, 0.582, and 0.554 belonged to the fourth-level EFL learners. It means that the second-level students had better monitoring activities among the three. The results were obtained from knowing the appropriate strategies and methods for learning English, choosing the material according to individual abilities, trying to improve skills in the language, and conducting prepared learning plans. These activities, which also involved concentration, learning, and interaction with friends, seniors, teachers, and native speakers of English, were better at SD 0.5 than the other two levels. The reason was that they were excited about joining the higher education environment, and their emphasis on subjects was firm.

Next, the second-level EFL learners applied effort to improve their English skills by performing regular activities for every meeting and learning with others. Consequently, they had high concentration and eagerness to interact. This finding contrasted with the effort of the EFL learners in level 6, which gave SD 0.55, meaning they mainly chose 'often' in terms of making preparation and concentration less critical. The increasingly complicated state of the subjects and the high number of assignments were the reasons for poor concentration. Also, these learners were familiar with strategies and methods for learning English, were capable of choosing materials according to their abilities, and improved their skills in the language by joining English clubs or discussion communities. They also arranged learning plans concentrated on English and enjoyed learning and having good interactions with friends, seniors, teachers, and native English speakers in the language.

Meanwhile, the fourth-level EFL learners, at SD 0.58, mostly gave 'rarely' in response to questions about the appropriate strategies and methods for learning English and choosing the material according to their abilities. They also rarely tried to improve their skills, implement the prepared language learning plan, concentrate, or learn and interact with colleagues and teachers. The mid-year period made them more comfortable while attending lectures and subsequently lessened their efforts towards increasing their abilities and selecting materials.

They also paid little attention to the lesson and were less confident when performing tasks or working in groups without a guide. When lecturers regularly or actively involved the students in class concerning special preparations they engaged in, they replied positively. The students responded that they made arrangements by reviewing the previous material and planning it for the next meeting based on the syllabus. For example, making summaries after discussing a topic helped them practice their summarising ability and enhance their understanding. Regarding the flexibility offered by the lecturer regarding the learning strategies, the students stated that they did not want to be omitted, despite the fact that the lecturer still played a pivotal role in advising them by providing specific instructions or directions. These outcomes created uncertainty and made it hard for students A and B to recommence their tasks.

On the other hand, students C and D stated that they favoured not being guided when beginning tasks because guidance often limited their creativity and resulted in predictable outcomes. It is also in line with Nguyen (2012) that the roles of teachers and learners are rooted deeply in people's thinking. Furthermore, EFL students favoured individual work over group tasks because they thought it would be easier to decide when and how to complete the individual work and gain fair outcomes or results. According to participants A, B, C, and D, group work's final evaluation and distribution tended to be less fair and stressful to the students. It is supported by Matthews and Campbell (1998) that, at a practical level, evaluation of coping may contribute to leading to a more informed choice of countermeasures for stress. The lecturer presented a similar idea, stating that giving them routine assignments, projects, and regular feedback was the best way to monitor students and encouraged independence. It backs up previous studies' claims (Kocak, 2003; Sönmez, 2016) that monitoring learners' progress can be made through available opportunities, such as classroom activities and homework. Here, the lecturer admitted several ways of giving opportunities by assigning routine assignments. Weekly assignments to the students regarding the material that has been learned regularly.

This assignment could be formed by highlighting previous material or looking for additional sources of information related to the material to be discussed. Then, enhancing students to study individually using this method and overseeing by requesting constructive criticism on the assignments. Next, giving feedback on assigned tasks is provided on a regular basis. It is in line with Lang and Kersting (2007) that feedback gradually increases students' ratings because it gives students a long-term perspective rather than no feedback. As the lecturer explained, asking questions at the start of class activities and requesting some students convey their ideas connected to the assignments.

Moreover, a reward and punishment system is used to encourage students to express their ideas. This actual proof supports the findings of Jameelah's (2020) study, which found that giving feedback and self-assessment assets for learners can significantly improve their autonomous strengths for learning in FL learning.

In conclusion, assigning routine assignments, whether individual or collaborative, in a group, doing projects individually or in a group, and regular feedback could train students to decide what should and should not. Nevertheless, since they preferred doing a project or task individually, it is the opposite of the autonomous learning concept that collaboration has to deal with students as the centre of learning. Thus, doing collaborative work seems to become the weakness of the EFL students in Indonesia.

5.4. The EFL Learners' Evaluating Activities

The evaluating stage is the learning assessment process that recognises the EFL learners' abilities to review their daily learning and outcomes, such as re-reading the assignment and assessing a piece of work. Table 3 shows that the EFL learners in the second, fourth, and sixth levels had mean scores of about 2.77, 2.68, and 2.78, with SD 0.595, 0.684, and 0.494, respectively. Based on the ANOVA test result, the significance value (p) of the evaluation data was 0.744, which is >0.05 ($0.744 > 0.05$). Therefore, it can be stated that there was no significant difference in the efforts of the second, fourth, and sixth-level EFL learners. This result indicated that they still did not give special attention to how they reviewed every learning session and the work they performed.

The sixth-level EFL learners had a similar mean score to the second-level participants (2.78: 2.77), while the fourth-level students' average was lower than that of the second-level learners (2.68: 2.77). The evaluation activities of sixth-level EFL learners produced SD 0.49 and were dominated by responses of "often," focusing on learning efficiency, developing their skills, and evaluating their performance. The reason was that they thought they were approaching the last year of college and naturally wanted to be academically better. The second-level EFL learners, where SD 0.58 was obtained, seldom wanted to test their learning because they still relied heavily on the lecturer's thorough instruction and guidance. Meanwhile, the students at the fourth level with SD 0.68 often preferred "rarely" to evaluate the effectiveness of learning, the degree to which they had progressed, and their learning outcomes for the umpteenth time. From the mean scores among the three classes, the fourth level produced the lowest mean score, which reinforced that they seldom made efforts to improve their learning independence, either inside or outside the EFL classroom.

This finding showed that while the EFL learners' level does not help them become more independent in evaluating, having good cognitive knowledge about autonomous learning can. Moreover, this finding also corresponded with the lecturer's belief that giving assignments could stimulate students to study independently (Zhong, 2013). In this case, the given task should be structured by paying attention to the type, time, purpose, and method of evaluating the given task. Preferably, one component of the assignment was related to learning that must be done independently. Then, the lecturers must prepare an assessment rubric that can measure the students' independent learning performance, and the achievements based on the results of evaluations made by the lecturer are conveyed to the learners. These steps are supported by Jameelah (2020), who stated in the study that there are different technology resources that learners can use. Also, feedback and self-assessment resources can be provided to strongly help their autonomous abilities in FL learning.

Although the list of tasks that the students engaged in during learning, including subjects, individual, or group assignments, was originally accomplished because of the instructor's directives, they made them more accountable. When there was a lack of support from themselves, the learners were allocated to become more autonomous, and both oral and written language competence showed their independence. This finding corresponds with research by Asiri Jameelah (2020), which stated that the idea of language learning was to train them to develop their skills individually. Yet, the students complained about the several activities they had to do, as obstacles, such as time, skill, and fragmented focus, caused the production of the less-than-ideal preferred result.

Therefore, concerning the research questions, it was clear statistically, as shown in Table 4, that there was no significant difference between the perception of autonomous learning and the efforts input among the second, fourth, and sixth-level EFL learners. The findings above confirmed that autonomous learning in Indonesia is still close to conventional teaching. Here, the teacher directs the method; students have access to experts in a typical classroom environment and are interested in questions (Cirocki et al., 2019) and debates. They are exposed to social interaction and can learn from others. However, some learners prefer an individualised or less organised climate, and EFL learners still prefer self-paced instruction. This point has been highlighted in previous studies with obviously different backgrounds (Jameelah, 2020; Phan, 2013b).

6. Conclusion

The autonomous learning perceived by EFL learners and the comparison value of initiating, monitoring, and evaluating activities performed by different levels of students at the college level gives

the readers a new paradigm and current phenomena. The result showed that EFL learners are not fully independent in deciding when and how to initiate, monitor, and evaluate during autonomous learning because teacher assistance is required. Meanwhile, the effort of being autonomous had no differences between levels 2, 4, and 6. This result revealed an urgent need for teachers to engage in valuable activities to enhance learners' decision-making.

Through shared decision-making between students and teachers, learner autonomy lies between total self-directed and traditional learning. The need to improve teachers' techniques that can be used to enable learners to be independent at the university level also exists. These activities could also potentially be a better predictor of success, particularly in the Indonesian EFL about autonomous learning. Consequently, it could affect the regularity and method with which teachers encourage autonomous learning and, ultimately, the opportunities for learners to become independent. Hence, it would be advisable for educators to have a specific autonomous work plan that would be consistent with the goals of the course, such as training. The training should provide both theory and experience so that learners can gain a deeper theoretical understanding of autonomous learning while still engaging in extensive pedagogical practice, thus, principals and supervisors would effectively control how EFL teachers cultivate autonomous learning in the classroom. This plan should be organised on a comprehensive basis, time-consuming, practical, varied, and versatile to enable ease of exploration. Therefore, it is possible to revolutionise how students learn and enhance the methods through which teachers present information by being aware of autonomous learning, especially in Indonesia.

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