KEY ISSUES IN EFL AUTONOMOUS LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of key issues for EFL autonomous learning. The purpose is a concise summary of ideas that should support more effective learning and develop independent students. The paper first outlines the nature of autonomous learning, particular in academic contexts, pinpoints the knowledge bases needed for EFL learner autonomy and recognize its advantages. From this foundation, a set of research implications for instruction are noted. These implications, in turn, form the basis for recommended teaching practices that will shape autonomous learning. The article concludes by noting the need for additional research to validate, and to provide new insights into, effective learner autonomy.

Key Words: autonomous learning, learner autonomy, autonomous learning activities

INTRODUCTION

The concept of autonomous learning was first associated with adult education (Little, 2007). Autonomy is not automatic. But we have learned to acquire through practices. Being an autonomous learner, we have to be aware of our capacity and willingness with an emphasis on conscious reflection and decision making (Sinclair, 2000). Despite the hardness of having one perfect definition of autonomous learning, later it is defined as the ability to take charge of one's own learning (Chan, 2001; Joshi, 2011; Berkleyen and Selimoglu, 2016).

It is widely recognized in EFL contexts, autonomous learners are the critical and the goal of advanced and university learning setting. I will first review the definition of learning autonomy and the way that it is practiced beyond the classroom. This foundation helps define the "contexts for application of autonomy" of learner autonomy, here viewed as the integration of many component skills. Determining the construct then provides the rationale for the development of autonomous learning and various ways and modes to enhance students learning. The focus of this paper will not be an extensive review of autonomous construct. That has been developed in more details in other sources (Balcikanli, 2010; Joshi, 2011). Instead, the goal is to draw connections from autonomous learning practices to potentially effective ways to learn independently.

ANALYSIS
Autonomous Learning: the Concept

There has been a lot of definition concerning the concept of autonomous learning. Learning autonomy is seen as a learner reflection and taking

responsibility for his own learning process (Lamb and Reinders, 2006, 2007; Benson, 2007;Murphy, 2008, Smith 2008;Little, 2009).Correspondingly, the notion of having the power and right to learn for learners isa pivotal aspect for learner autonomy. The most commonly accepted way for researcher to promote EFL learner autonomy involves autonomy-supportive instructional (Wallace and Sung, 2016), learners' engagement (Xhaferi and Xhaferi, 2010), and computer-aided material (Wang, 2010; Pop, 2010). These autonomy-supportive teaching practices influence students' attitude toward learning process.

The identification of these supportive conditions has been the outcome of many studies, and it remains the source of much current research. In such a framework, revisiting autonomous learning represents a preference for students' empowerment (Wallace and Sung, 2016). In this section, research is reviewed that support the relationship between learner autonomy and practices. Much of the research has been conducted in student teachers' beliefs (Joshi, 2011; Razeq, 2014; Wallace and Sung, 2016; Szocs, 2017), perceptions (Chan, 2003; Balcikanli, 2010; Cakici, 2017) and practices (Borg and A-Busaidi, 2012; Alhaysony, 2016).

How Autonomous Learning Works
In this brief section, I divided autonomous skills into teachers' and students' roles in fostering learner autonomy. All of practices occur in the classroom setting which can be understood as a sense of autonomy. Teachers' attitude does not always positive. In some respect, teachers get

difficulties in creating such an autonomy culture in classroom practice. It needs autonomous skills in their teaching training. Students' readiness for autonomous learning is also often questioned. Research on students' practices has shown that they revealed little autonomy in their learning (Demirtas and Sert, 2010) while some others exhibited a positive attitude of autonomy in their achievement (Yildirim, 2008).

Focusing on teachers' perspective, autonomous-learning experiences have been found as an important source in creating an autonomous classroom culture (Balcikanli, 2010).As Barfield et al. (2001) claimed that teachers should be autonomously behave to help the students learn independently. It will be conflicting to internalize a sense of autonomy unless teachers have themselves inexperienced. Following that, autonomy training to respond the demand of constructive classroom is needed (Balcikanli, 2010).When teachers realized the students' engagement in the learning process is effective in the learning process, they will positively practice autonomous learning activities.

Research on teachers' beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy has shown that this responsibility remains the teacher as the key context where learner autonomy can be stimulated (Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012; Borg and Alshumaimeri, 2017). Teachers should create a strong sense of energy and continuity for their continued engagement with promoting Learner autonomy in their class. Having said that, established educational cultures is conducive to the idea of typically conceived the learners to take

responsibility and control over their learning.Even, beliefs and practices, as the promising issues, the space for conflicting result might occur.

Lengkanawati (2017) reported that learner autonomy in EFL settings is still intriguing; despite her argument about learner autonomy could be developed through independent study. This technical perspective gives new insights in the learning process since the autonomous learning expects that the learner should be able to manage, monitor, evaluate, and make decision about what, how, and whyhe learns particular matter. With estimates six indicators of teachers' perceptions on autonomous learning, further shefound that full independent learning is hard to achieve. This is in line with teachers' respond toward the need of big portion to create a more effective teaching-learning process. Fromthe psychological perspective, teachers perceive that it is equally feasible to develop learner autonomy in both beginner and advanced learners.Several activities such as study in the library, learning outside the classroom, use the internet, etc. can be beneficial for activating learner autonomy for the learners of all ages. Other interesting findings out of teachers' perceptions and practices, learner autonomy training could also contribute to teachers' perceptions. Thus, teachers' beliefs improved significantly after the professional workshop. They equally see ages and the role of the teacher are the key elements to help learners to develop autonomy.

Likewise, Chan (2003) explores the applicability of EFL learner autonomy in the local context. That is, it is the ability to create autonomous learning conditions and opportunities. Although autonomous activities can be carried out in and outside the classroom, the manifestations of autonomous language learning behavior does not promptly reveal. Teachers who are aware of importance of learner autonomy, responsible in learning/teaching process, and create autonomous learning activities can create effective language learning. All description above provides a rich source of information regarding the complexities of learner autonomy. Teachers would probably find these components effective and desirable to their teaching practices.

A concern with the principles of learner autonomy has been also well-established in the students' perspective. In most respect, autonomous learning is generally regarded as two sided coin to take reasonable position. At the same time, any consideration of students' perspective has to recognize learner behaviors and perceptions of autonomous learning in which teachers' views differ from the students. One of the differences is inability of the students to display autonomous behavior (Yildirim, 2008; Joshi, 2011; Hozayen, 2011).

Berkleyen and Selimoglu (2016) who investigated students' behaviors and perceptions of autonomous language learning found that students' perceptions of their teacher and their own responsibilities during the language learning process dominantly occur outside the class. Among the autonomous in-class activities, students preferthat teachers should be held responsible for their progress during the lesson covering the materials, activities, and evaluation attributes. In addition, Kocak (2003)

presents this phenomenon as the result of teacher-dependent learning characteristics. Students perceive that they can learn effectively when teachers help and guide them appropriately.Berkleyen and Seligmoglu study found that to promote autonomy, learners' awareness and readiness should take into account.

It should be noted that education cultural might indicate the successful EFL learner autonomy. As reported by Talley (2014), students' response was positive when direct, sustained intervention is provided in language learning process. As a result, "passive" class can be reduced. In a broad sense, teachers apply scaffolding technique to help the students become autonomy in their own. The implication of this is that the students are able to create awareness among the need, benefits and responsibilities toward learner autonomy.

Concluding Comments

While there are a number of additional recommendations that can be made for fostering autonomous learning in EFL setting, this paper describe key components and knowledge bases needed for understanding and implementing learner autonomy across instruction and curricula and suggest ways to promote EFL learner autonomy. This paper first described the research foundations for autonomous learning and noted implications for best practices. It is also outlined as simple array of both teachers and students' beliefs and practices that can be taken as considerations for framing effective learning activities. The key to this on-going effort is to continue exploring

autonomous practices for examining students' readiness for autonomy.

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