



Teachers' Multiple Role-Promoting Learners' Autonomy in Communication Skills

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Received: 25 Jul 2022; Received in revised form: 10 Aug 2022; Accepted: 15 Aug 2022; Available online: 18 Aug 2022

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Abstract— *The main goal of the research encompasses learner autonomy or learner-centered learning. The majority of teachers employ traditional teaching methods and teacher-centered classroom practices. The shift of conventional methods of instruction into self-directed learning or interactional techniques. Therefore, first and foremost, teachers' roles need to be changed as managers, supervisors, resource persons, and counsellors. This will enhance independent learning among students by encouraging collaboration, coordination, and a strong bond between learners and teachers. There are several affective factors to consider, such as family, institutional expectations, a lack of background circumstance, a lack of strategic involvement, logistical limitations, assessment pressure, and so forth. Data gathered from fifty teachers for the study was analysed in order to find teachers' perspectives on how to support and promote autonomous learning in their classrooms. Moreover, the findings showed that institutional norms and a lack of teaching strategies hindered learner autonomy. In addition, the teachers suggested approaches to improve their professional development programmes to conduct, which can improve their own qualities as teachers and also help to develop the learner's autonomy. Evidently, it supports teachers and students to promote an independent learning process.*

Keywords— *Learners' autonomy, facilitator, teaching methods, language learning, communication skills.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of second language education has had an impact on improving the way language teaching and learning are performed and conceptualised in different ways. Traditional techniques for teaching languages have gradually given way to learner-centered and communicative approaches. Because it stresses the student's role rather than the teacher's function, learner autonomy is one of the primary developments associated with the shift in second language teaching (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). So, historically and conceptually, communicative language education (CLT) (Nunan, 2000) is linked to the idea of autonomy in language acquisition.

Learners' independent learning has been considered a desirable objective in language teaching. According to

Knowles (2001), one of the primary objectives of education is to promote learning as a continuous process and to learn in a self-directed manner. Actually, the shift to a learner-centered approach has increased the focus on the importance of student autonomy for the language acquisition process. In a classroom that is primarily focused on the teacher, independent and self-reliant learners are exceptional (Weimer, 2002). The most proficient learners are those who "have gained a high degree of autonomy," so being independent is crucial (Little, 1991). In the field of modern language teaching, the idea of learner autonomy has gained popularity (e.g., Benson, 2001, 2006; Blin, 2004, 2005; Crabbe, 1999; Jimenez Raya, 2009, 2011; Little, 1991, 2007, 2009).

Learner autonomy has been defined and characterized in a variety of ways across the literature, but it may typically be summed up as the potential to be in charge of one's own learning. Sometimes learner autonomy is perceived to be something that can be achieved without a teacher. By virtue of their responsibilities and methods in the classroom, instructors are actually in charge of fostering independent learners. According to Little (1996), teachers should assist students in taking ownership of their learning because this is not a behaviour that often occurs. In addition to imparting knowledge to kids, teachers have to have additional responsibilities. Teachers can encourage students to take more ownership of their learning by shifting from their typical role to one of an organizer or facilitator.

It is important to consider and never underestimate the role that teachers play in fostering independent language acquisition. In the relevant studies, there are several theoretical study books and articles on the functions of language instructors, but there are only a few actual investigations (Han, 2014). Additionally, universities were the primary setting for the majority of the studies on learner autonomy. While encouraging learner autonomy has been viewed as an educational objective in a number of situations, cultural and educational circumstances have a significant impact on how instructors apply their ideas to their instruction (Yldrm, 2012). Thus, in order to foster learner autonomy in the college setting, it is essential to assess the existing responsibilities that EFL college instructors perform.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In a report for the Council of Europe, Holec originally presented the most well-known definition of learner autonomy, which is as follows:

To take charge of one's learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e.: determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.); evaluating what has been learned and applying it acquired (Holec, 1981).

The concept of learner autonomy has been discussed and explored by several researchers and experts since the 1980s. They have not yet been able to agree on what autonomy actually means. According to Benson (2003), the most challenging issue surrounding autonomy in language acquisition is, "What is autonomy?" He defends it by pointing out that any response to this issue is basically going to be subjective. The concept of autonomy

in communicative competence has multiple meanings. According to Gardner and Miller (1999), it is challenging to define the concept of autonomy because it has been described differently by various authors.

In education in general and language learning in particular, there are multiple definitions of learner autonomy. The theory developed by Holec (1981) has, nevertheless, received the most accolades in language acquisition research (Benson, 2006). According to this concept, learner autonomy is the potential to "gain ownership of one's own learning" (Holec, 1981). In accordance with this definition, the key elements of learner autonomy are commitment and competence. It shows how unique every learner is and how independent learners are capable of making all decisions pertaining to their own learning process (Yang, 2005).

This concept, which was intended primarily for educational development, emphasized that students had total responsibility for their individual learning. However, as Little (2007) noted, learner-centered theories and an increase in national curricula promoting "independent learning" or "critical thinking" prompted a shift in the definition of autonomy in the 1990s.

According to their individual views, many researchers, however, add to or modify this general definition. A capacity for separation, critical thinking, decision-making, and independent action, for instance, is what Little (1991, p. 4) indicates when she describes autonomy. Little referred to the psychology of learning and the concept of learner autonomy in this description. Another illustration of how autonomy is defined is by Benson (2001, p. 47), who says it is the ability to direct one's own learning.

According to Littlewood (1996), an independent learner is one who is competent and able to formulate and perform learning initiatives on their own accord. He states that "ability and willingness are the two key components that determine this capability" (p. 428). In conclusion, it shows that autonomy is not basically a matter of one's individual responsibility for their learning and that it is not offered by a methodology or a teacher with all these diverse interpretations (Paiva, 2005). As noted by several researchers like Benson (1997), Sheerin (1997), Breen and Mann (1997), it is something that is significantly more complicated (cited in Paiva, 2005).

Statement of the problem

The subject of this research is individual learning. In general, learner autonomy is a crucial component of successful language acquisition. To achieve the communication aim in the educational sphere, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration between instructors and students are crucial. Independence provides

knowledge and confidence to face the contextual settings of the real world. Teachers of English regularly criticize students' poor attitudes toward self-learning and communication skill development. As a result, encouraging learner autonomy is one of the best approaches for both students and teachers. Teachers' roles should change to include resource people, organizer, advisors, counsellors, and so on.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, the researchers used a descriptive survey method. It focuses on the actual contributions of English language teachers' teaching to promoting learner autonomy.

A questionnaire that the researcher designed serves as the study's research tool.

population and sample of the study.

The population of the present study is comprised of female English language teachers from various women's colleges. It is random to choose the sample. There were 50 female EFL teachers in the sample group. Participants are college teachers who work at various women's colleges. Their

educational backgrounds and teaching experiences differ from one another.

The Instrument of the Study

A structured survey questionnaire is a primary tool used for data collection. The questionnaire is distributed among female English language teachers of women's colleges. The first section of the questionnaire consists of five items designed in the format of a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree to identify the constraints on developing learner autonomy. The second section is designed to find out the suggestions that teachers find most helpful in promoting learner autonomy in their educational context. The questionnaire consists of four items designed in the format of a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Cronbach's alpha value was calculated to determine the reliability of the study questionnaire. Alpha coefficients of 0.70 or higher are considered acceptable (DeVellis, 1991). The results show that the overall value of Cronbach's alpha is 0.809. The values range from 0.803 to 0.815, which suggests that the items have a relatively high degree of reliability. Table 2 presents the Cronbach's alpha values of the two sections of the questionnaire.

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha values to measure the reliability of the questionnaire

S.No	Sections	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Challenges faced by teachers to promote independent learning	0.815
2	Suggestions to promote learners' autonomy in language learning	0.803
Total		0.809

IV. RESULTS

Table 1. The sample responses about the challenges faced by teachers to promote learners' independent learning

S.No	Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	SD
		Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%		
1	Students lack the ability to learn autonomously.	15	30	20	40	13	26	1	2	1	2	2.06	0.91
2	Teachers lack sufficient strategies to encourage student autonomy.	9	18	15	30	9	18	12	24	5	10	2.78	1.28
3	The autonomy of teachers is lacking.	12	24	7	14	15	30	11	22	5	10	2.8	1.31
4	The use of technology in	6	12	9	18	11	22	15	30	9	18	3.24	1.29

	language acquisition is ineffective.												
5	The teachers' flexibility to make decisions about their curriculum is constrained by institutional norms.	25	50	8	16	5	10	6	12	6	12	2.20	1.47

The challenges to promoting learner autonomy were examined in the first section of the questionnaire. The study results in the table show that the vast majority of the study sample 35 teachers representing (70%) (30% SA & 40% A) agreed on “Students lack the ability to learn autonomously”; 66% of the participants expressed agreement on the item, “Rules and regulations of the schools restrict the teachers’ freedom in making choices on their teachings”. (5) representing (50%) teachers

responded “strongly agree” and (8) representing (16%) responded ,“agree”. Approximately 48% (18% SA & 30% A) agreed that Teachers lack sufficient strategies to encourage student autonomy; (3) teachers representing 38% (24% SA & 14% A) indicated that autonomy of teachers is lacking, and (4) teachers representing (30 %) (12% SA & 18% A) showed agreement on the use of technology in language acquisition is ineffective.

Table 2. The sample responses about the suggestions to promote learners' autonomy in the language learning

S.No	Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	SD
		Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%		
1	Introduce teacher education to improve learner autonomy	18	36	12	24	15	30	3	6	2	4	2.18	1.12
2	providing professional development programmes on learner autonomy to in-service teachers	18	36	18	36	12	24	1	2	1	2	1.98	0.94
3	Reduce the institutional norms that limit teacher autonomy.	25	50	15	30	9	18	0	0	1	2	1.74	0.90
4	Teachers' ongoing assessment and evaluation of their own teaching methods.	27	54	14	28	8	16	0	0	1	2	1.68	0.89

The second section of the questionnaire is related to the suggestions to promote learners’ autonomy in language learning. It includes four (4) items. The results indicate that the majority of participants support the statement that teachers' ongoing assessment of and evaluation of their own teaching methods can help in developing autonomous learners; (27) (54 %) teachers strongly agreed and (14) (28%) teachers agreed. The table also shows that most of

the respondents agreed on item no. (3), "Reduce the institutional norms that limit teacher autonomy." (25) (50%) of the participants agreed with the statement, and (15%), (30%) strongly agreed. On the other hand, only 2% of participants strongly disagreed. Regarding the approach of offering in-service teachers with professional development programmes on learner autonomy, the results show that there was agreement on the statement. There

were (18) (36%) teachers who responded "strongly agree," and (18) (36%) who responded "agree." Finally, the table shows that (18) teachers responded "strongly agree" and (12) responded "agree" to the item "Introduce teacher education to improve learner autonomy."

The significance of the learner's autonomy in language learning

This study focuses on the opinions of teachers on independent learning when they are teaching or following their teaching methods at universities. It has been carefully examined through empirical research to determine the challenges that obstruct the classroom from promoting learner autonomy. Students appear to be passive participants in their education the majority of the time in institutions (Tamer, 2013). They rely on their teachers significantly and lack the motivation to take responsibility for their education. Traditional approaches, used in the majority of classes, have been used to teach English for a very long time. Examples include the grammar-translation method and a focus on studying. Additionally, the majority of teachers employ their mother tongue for a wide range of teaching objectives. However, the recent curriculum development of several academic topics, including the English language, is a result of the present education transformation in colleges. It is evident that the newly created English curriculum seeks to increase students' motivation, involvement, and autonomy. In reality, it concentrates on encouraging independent learning in order to fulfil the objective of giving students lifelong skills that would help them deal with global events (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Curriculum creation, material updating, and teacher training might all benefit greatly from examining teachers' actions that promote learner autonomy.

In order to establish promoting learner independence as a proper learning goal in a college setting, this study tries to fill in this research gap. It indicates that independence is presently obtaining considerable prominence across a range of academic fields. Learners can acquire significant levels of independence and creativity with the support of learner autonomy. Numerous studies explore the value of independence in language acquisition from distinct viewpoints. According to Harmer (2007), learners should be encouraged to create their own learning techniques so that, to the greatest extent possible, they become independent learners in order to enhance their chances of effective language acquisition.

Using techniques that will make students more competent learners in the future, self-regulated learners are able to learn from their own achievements and shortcomings (Crabbe, 1999). Three arguments are given for the value of

independence in education by Umeda (2000, quoted in Onozawa, 2010): cultivating the learner's individuality, growing the variety of the learner's educational and cultural background, and establishing a lifetime capacity to adapt with the rapid societal changes. Having the ability to direct one's own learning is always beneficial, according to Benson (2001).

The Importance of Autonomy in Language Learning

It shows that there is currently more emphasis on independence across a wide range of academic fields. Developing high levels of independence and creativity can be facilitated through learner autonomy. Many academics have discussed the value of independent learning in language. According to Harmer (2007), in order to compensate for the limitations of classroom time and to increase the likelihood that language learning will be productive, learners should be encouraged to create their own learning techniques in an effort to become as independent as possible.

Independent learners are able to use techniques that will make them more proficient learners in the future by learning from their own triumphs and errors (Crabbe, 1999). Three reasons are given by Umeda (2000, cited in Onozawa, 2010) for the significance of autonomy in education: fostering the learner's individuality; developing the diversity of the learner's educational and cultural background; and developing a lifelong ability to cope with rapid social changes. According to Benson (2001), it is always beneficial to cultivate the ability to take charge of one's own learning.

The role of teachers in learners' autonomy

Teachers generally decide whether to include individuality in language learning, and supporting flexibility mostly rests on teachers defining their own roles (Hill, 1994). In order to help students achieve greater autonomy, Crabbe (1999) suggests that the teacher's position ought to be re-evaluated. Teachers must act as facilitators or counsellors when students take on greater responsibility for their own education (Riley, 1997; Scharle & Szabo, 2000; Wend en, 2002). (Yang, 2005). According to Gardner and Miller (1999), teachers should develop new skills and abilities to take on new responsibilities as managers, organisers, evaluators, and counsellors, among others. Dam (2008) explains the function of the instructor as a consultant and facilitator in an independent learning environment. Voller (1997) describes the facilitator, counsellor, and resource functions of the instructor in fostering independent language acquisition.

V. CONCLUSION

The current research investigated how English teachers effectively promote student independent learning in the colleges. This can be accomplished by EFL teachers to promote independent language learning in their respective academic contexts. According to the findings, learner autonomy has a bright future in the colleges. There has been a notable shift toward a more learner-centred pedagogy, which is reflected in the practices of the present teachers. Therefore, the current circumstance might be seen as a phase of transfer from traditional techniques to student-centred approaches. The research conclusion, made it clear that English teachers' contributions to independent learning depend on the situations in which they are actively involved in teaching. The role of teachers play a multiple source of information and also a manager, resource, and counsellor. The findings also showed that teachers can provide their students with the necessary preparation for independent learning by having sufficient awareness of the notion of learner autonomy and the best practices that students need to be autonomous learners. As a result, students will be able to control their language learning in a variety of ways, including by reflecting on their own learning process, assessing their performance, and making decisions. The crucial role that teachers play in fostering independent language acquisition should never be discounted.

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