



A Study of Iranian Professors' Perceptions of EFL University Students' Autonomy

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Abstract

This paper investigated the relationship between professors' perception about BA students' autonomy and learners' actual level of autonomy. This research also attempted to shed light on the factors that contribute to learners' autonomy. Fifty undergraduate students and twenty-two professors of English major from Islamic Azad University of Bandar Abbas, Iran served as the participants of the current study. Two questionnaires, one for students, and one for teachers were chosen as the instruments of the current study. After collecting data through instruments, the statistical analysis was done. The results of the study demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between teachers' perception about learners' autonomy and learners' actual level of autonomy. Furthermore, those factors which foster learners' autonomy were identified. The present study has also some theoretical and pedagogical implications for both language learners and language teachers.

Keywords: autonomy, teachers' perception, language learning, language teaching

INTRODUCTION

According to Esch (1996), learner autonomy is developed if supportive circumstances and contexts are provided to learners. Breen (1984) states that this support can only be given with the process syllabus and learner centered approach. Moreover, Holec's (1979) defined autonomy as ability to take charge of one's own learning. The concept of autonomy is connected with communicative approach according to Nunan (1991). He also added language learning can be affective if learners are allowed to develop and exercise their autonomy.

In today world, one aim of any education program is to enable student to use whatever they learn in their own life student. If they used whatever they learn in real situation, they would participant actively in the process of learning.

On the other hand, according to Kennedy (2002), teacher autonomy is of paramount importance because the relationship between teachers and learners is critical in foreign

language acquisition and both teachers and learners need to understand teacher's autonomy and learner's autonomy in order to adapt themselves to classroom learning autonomy. The present study will focus on the relationship between teachers' perception of learners' autonomy and learners' actual level of autonomy with the hope to contribute the related research in the second language learning.

There is broad agreement in the theoretical literature that learner autonomy grows out of the individual learner's acceptance of responsibility for his or her own learning (Benson & Voller, 1997; Little, 1991; Dickinson, 1995). This means that autonomy requires the learner to develop control over his or her own learning and his or her own role in that process. According to Benson (2001), this control might take various forms for different individuals and even different forms for the same individual depending on the contexts or times.

Furthermore, different definitions were also offered for teacher autonomy. Little (1995) first defines teacher autonomy as the "teachers" capacity to engage in self-directed teaching." Then, researchers have been endeavoring to define teacher autonomy from different aspects. Aoki's (2000) offers an explicit definition of teacher autonomy, suggesting that this involves the capacity, freedom, and/or responsibility to make choices concerning one's own teaching". According to Smith (2000), teacher autonomy refers to "the ability to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes for oneself as a teacher, in cooperation with others." Benson (2000) argues that teacher autonomy can be seen as "a right to freedom from control (or an ability to exercise this right) as well as actual freedom from control".

Holec's (1981) pointed out that the term autonomy can be used in at least five different ways:

1. For situations in which learners study entirely on their own
2. For a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning -
3. For an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education-
4. For the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning
5. For the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

All of which will be very hard or even impossible to be accomplished by the learners (Thanh Nga, 2014). Furthermore, Autonomous learners are the ones who take active roles in the learning process, by finding more learning opportunities for themselves, rather than being the complete pursuer of the teacher. A comprehensive review of scholarly articles on learner autonomy in language learning was conducted. A number of studies showed that there is a causal relationship between motivation and autonomy (Benson, 2001; Dickinson, 1995; Littlewood, 1996). There have been a large number of studies focusing on the roles associated with teachers and learners in an autonomous learning environment (Benson, 2001; Dickinson, 1995; Oxford, 1989; Richards & Rogers, 2001). A number of studies conducted on the beliefs and attitudes of learners demonstrated positive effects of learners towards learning and autonomy (Cotterall, 1995; Horwitz, 1999)

The review of literature indicates that autonomous learning is indispensable for effective language learning which will enable language learners to develop more responsibilities for their own learning. Therefore, most of the relevant research studies highlight the importance of promoting learner autonomy in language classroom. The primary purpose of the present study is to investigate the relationship between teachers' perspective regarding autonomy and the students' actual level of autonomy and to identify the factors which contribute to the learners' autonomy. To this end, undergraduate students who study English major at Bandar Abbas University along with their professors were chosen to participate in the current study. They were asked to fill out the related questionnaires. Then, the results of questionnaire were compared in order to find out whether there is any significant relationship between teachers' perception of autonomy and students' actual level of autonomy.

METHOD

Participants

The participants of the present study were about 50 undergraduate students with age range of 20 to 34 who were studying English Translation at semester 5 and 6 at Islamic Azad University of Bandar Abbas branch. Furthermore, 22 professors of who teach at the same university participated in this study. Both teachers and students were given a related questionnaire to fill out in order to provide a researcher with insightful information about teachers' perception of autonomy and students' actual level of autonomy.

Design of the study

It investigated how autonomous learners can learn to monitor their own learning and rely on themselves and self-correct themselves. Two questionnaires, to examine students' actual level of autonomy and teachers' perception related to the learners' autonomy were used to collect data about teachers' perceptions related to the implementation of autonomous learning and instructional process in the program. On the other hand, the present study can be considered as descriptive because of making descriptive statement about particular group. In this study quantitative data were collected. The data were collected through two kinds of questionnaires, one of which aimed to identify teachers' perception and the other aimed to find out students' actual level of autonomy. Furthermore, the last part of the questionnaire will focus on the demographic information of the students.

Instruments

Two questionnaires were selected as instruments for this study. The first questionnaire was assigned to the teachers to demonstrate their perception of learners' autonomy. This questionnaire was funded by the British Council and was conducted by Dr Simon Borg, University of Leeds and Dr. Saleh Al-Busaidi, Sultan Qaboos University. 22 professors of English field at Islamic Azad University of Bandar Abbas branch were invited to contribute to this study by completing the aforementioned questionnaire. The other

questionnaire was related to learners' autonomy. In other words, it measured the students' actual level of autonomy. This questionnaire was adopted from Zhang and Li (2004).

The questionnaire of English Language Teachers' Beliefs about Learner Autonomy

The questionnaire is based on the study about learner autonomy in ELT being funded by the British Council and which is being conducted by Dr Simon Borg, University of Leeds and Dr Saleh Al-Busaidi, Sultan Qaboos University. The goal of developing this questionnaire was to support the development of learner autonomy. The questionnaire included no right or wrong answers and it primarily focused on the teachers' perspective and opinion about learners' autonomy. Furthermore, the questionnaire included 37 items based on the five-point Likert scale. It also enjoyed the established reliability and validity for measuring teachers' beliefs about learners' autonomy. It took about 20 minutes to be completed.

Learner autonomy questionnaire

Learners' autonomy questionnaire was utilized to measure the learners' autonomy. This questionnaire was developed by Zhang and Li (2004). It mainly examined students' level of autonomy and demonstrates whether learners are autonomous or not. The questionnaire comprised of two parts and included 21 items. The first section of the questionnaire consisted of 11 questions based on the five-point liker scale ranging from never to always .The second part of the questionnaire included 10 items and the participants should show their responses by choosing the closet response to their view in 30 minutes. The students' choices in the questionnaire were the scores from A to E that are respectively 1,2,3,4 and 5. It estimated the participants' autonomy with established reliability and validity.

Procedure

To conduct the present study several steps were taken. 50 male and female students with the age range of 20 to 34 who were studying English Translation at semester 5 and 6 at Islamic Azad University of Bandar Abbas branch were randomly selected to participate in this study. Furthermore, 22 professors at the same university were selected to provide information about lecturers' perspective regarding learners' autonomy. After selecting the participants of the study two questionnaires, one for students and one for teachers were distributed among the participants. The participants were assured that their responses would be kept secret in order to express their ideas freely. After completing the questionnaires, the results of the questionnaires were analyzed and compare using SPSS version 18.00.

Data analysis

Questionnaires were applied for the purpose of data collection procedures. The statistical analyses were conducted by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

version 18 through several statistical procedures. According to Mackey and Gass (2005), descriptive statistics provides a simple overview of data, thus allowing the researcher to expand her/his overall understanding of the data set. The results were analyzed under two sub-headings teachers' perception of learners' autonomy and learners' autonomy. Regarding the analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaire, descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and frequency were calculated to summarize the results of the both teachers and students' responses to the questionnaire as well as their demographic information. Since variables were related in linear relationship, Pearson Product-moment correlation analysis were conducted to compute the correlation between two variables, namely teachers' perception of students' autonomy and students' level of autonomy. Furthermore, based on the descriptive statistics of the obtained data, the factors which contributed to the students' self-correction, autonomy, and monitoring were identified.

RESULTS

The primary purpose of the present study is to investigate the relationship between lecturers' perspective regarding autonomy and the students' actual level of autonomy and also investigating the factors that contribute to autonomous behavior of the learners. To this end two research questions were considered.

1. Is there any relationship between teacher's perception of Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' autonomy and students' actual level of autonomy?

To answer the first research question, the data of the questionnaires were submitted to SPSS statistical program. The purpose of using teachers' perception of learner autonomy questionnaire was to show teachers' attitude toward their student autonomy and how they mostly thought they can promote students level of autonomy. The learner autonomy questionnaire was used in order to shed light on the fact that how much students were autonomous. Table 1 illustrates the descriptive statistics related to the teachers' beliefs about learners' autonomy questionnaire.

Table 1. Summary of Descriptive Statistics for teachers' perception questionnaire

Items	Number=22					Mean	SD
	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 unsure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	Statistic	Statistic
1. Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy	18.2%	27.3%	27.3%	13.8%	13.4%	2.7727	1.30683
2. Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy	13.6%	22.7%	36.4%	18.2%	9.1%	2.8636	1.16682
3. Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone	9.1%	13.6%	18.2%	22.7%	36.4%	3.6364	1.36436
4. Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn	0%	0%	18.2%	36.4%	45.5%	4.2727	.76730
5. Individuals who lack	0%	13.6%	45.5%	18.2%	22.7%	3.5000	1.01183

autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners							
6. Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom	0%	13.6%	40.9%	18.2%	27.3%	3.5909	1.05375
7. Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy	4.5%	9.1%	18.2%	40.9%	27.3%	3.7727	1.10978
8. Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.	54.5%	36.4%	9.1%	0%	0%	1.7273	1.16217
9. It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners	18.2%	36.4%	22.7%	13.6%	9.1%	2.5909	1.22121
10. It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults	18.2%	18.2%	27.3%	18%	18.4%	3.0000	1.38013
11. Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence	0%	0%	9 %	45.5%	45.5%	4.3636	.65795
12. Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.	0%	4.5%	27.3%	40.9%	27.3%	4.5691	.86790
13. Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds	4.5%	18.2%	7.3%	47.3%	22.7%	3.4545	1.18431
14. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do	0%	0%	0%	36.4%	63.6%	4.6364	.49237
15. Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centered classrooms.	0%	11.4%	11.4%	13.6%	63.6%	4.1545	1.36198
16. Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learner opportunities to learn from each other.	0%	0%	0%	36.2%	36.8%	4.6364	.49237
17. Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching	4.5%	4.5%	10.7%	41.8%	38.5%	3.9091	1.10880
18. Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher	0%	9.1%	12.7%	18.2%	60%	4.0909	1.06499
19. Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together	0%	0%	22.7%	31.8%	45.5%	4.2273	.81251
20. Learner autonomy is only possible with adult learners	22.7%	27.3%	27.3%	22.7%	0%	2.5000	1.10195
21. Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access centre	13.6%	27.3%	31.8%	18.2%	9.1%	3.8182	1.18065
22. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed	13.6%	22.7%	22.7%	18.2%	22.7%	3.1364	1.39029

23. Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners	40.9%	27.3%	9.1%	9.1%	13.6%	2.2727	1.45346
24. Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher	18.2%	22.7%	31.8%	13.6%	13.6%	2.8182	1.29601
25. Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy	0%	0%	4.5%	36.4%	59.1%	4.5455	.59580
26. Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners	27.3	50	18.2	4.5	0%	2.0455	.95005
27. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials	0%	9.1%	18.2%	45.5%	27.3%	3.9091	.92113
28. Learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy	0%	13.6%	13.6%	18.2%	54.5%	4.1364	1.12527
29. Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy	0%	4.5%	13.6%	36.4%	45.5%	4.2273	.86914
30. Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy	0%	13.6%	9.1%	45.5%	31.8%	3.9545	.99892
31. Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy	0%	0%	13.6%	36.4%	50%	4.3636	.72673
32. The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.	4.5%	4.5%	9.1%	36.4%	45.5%	4.1364	1.08213
33. Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated	0%	0%	0%	22.7%	77.3%	4.7727	.42893
34. The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy	0%	18.2%	63.6%	18.2%	0%	3.0000	.61721
35. The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy	0%	0%	0%	36.4%	63.6%	4.6364	.49237
36. Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner	0%	9.1%	13.6%	27.3%	50%	4.8000	1.19523
37. Become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning	0%	18.2	18.2	31.8	31.8	3.7727	2.19536

As table 1 demonstrates, most of the teachers (77.3%) believed that Learner autonomy has a positive effect on the success of the language learners and learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would (68.2%). So, it is generally admitted that autonomous learners are more successful language learners. On

the other hand, it is obvious that teachers have a remarkable and undeniable role in enhancing learner autonomy which, in turns, leads to more language learning. As Table 1 reveals, most of the teachers asserted that learner autonomy doesn't mean learning without teachers (90%) and learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher (78.2%). In fact, it implies that teachers should teach students how they can become more autonomous. Furthermore, most of the teacher claimed that learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centered classrooms (77.2%) and learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching (80.3%) and they believed that Learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy ($M=4.13$, $P=72.7\%$). In fact, most of the teachers stated that learner autonomy could be enhanced by providing them with opportunity to make decision about the materials, activities, the way of assessment and so on which is discussed in full details in the result of second research question which dealt with the factors which contributed to the learner autonomy and self-correction.

At the second step, the learner autonomy questionnaire which aimed to estimate students' actual level of autonomy and learners' preferences in language classes was administered to the 50 undergraduate students. Table 2 reveals the descriptive statistics related to the learners autonomy questionnaire. The questionnaire was composed of two sections the first section included 11 items and was based on the five-point likert scale ranging from (1) Never, (2) rarely, (3) sometimes, (4) often, (5)always.

Table 2. Summary of descriptive statistics for learner autonomy

Items	Number=50					Mean	SD
	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 sometimes	4 Often	5 Always		
1. I think I have the ability to learn English well	3%	2%	16%	41%	38%	3.9600	1.11685
2. I make good use of my free time in English study	0%	6%	26%	26%	42%	4.0400	.96806
3. I preview before the class	0%	8%	20%	38%	34%	3.9800	.93656
4. I find I can finish my task in time.	2%	12%	20%	32%	34%	3.8400	1.09470
5. I keep a record of my study, such as keeping a diary, writing review etc.	8%	8%	26%	24%	34%	3.6800	1.25259
6. I make self-exam with the exam papers chosen by myself	6%	0%	20%	34%	40%	4.0200	1.07836
7. I reward myself such as going shopping, playing etc. When I make progress	0%	4%	18%	38%	40%	4.1400	.85738
8. I attend out-class activities to practice and learn the language	10%	12%	10%	32%	36%	3.7200	1.34073
9. During the class, I try to catch chances to take part in activities such as pair/group discussion, role-play...	2%	0%	12%	32%	54%	4.3600	.85141
10. I know my strengths and weaknesses in my English study	2%	0%	10%	34%	54%	4.3800	.83029
11. I choose books, exercises which suit me, neither too difficult nor too easy	4%	8%	12%	26%	50%	4.1000	1.14731

As table 2 indicates, broadly speaking learners assess their ability of being autonomous completely positive. As can be observed in the above table, most of the students chose “often” or “always” and these options gained the higher percentage. Regarding the first item, most of the students (79%) believed in their ability for learning English language and only 5% thought that they had deficiency. With respect to the second item, majority of the students (60 %) stated that they make good use of their free time in English. In response to the third item students (72%) were inclined to preview before the class and finish a task in time (68%). More importantly, more than half of the students (54%) demonstrated that they prefer to keep a record of their study by keeping a diary, writing review, analyzing, etc. Regarding item 6, most of the students (74%) tried to assess themselves and make self-exam with the exam papers chosen by themselves, besides, 78 % of the students expressed that they reward themselves when they progress. Furthermore, 68 % of the learners asserted that they had tendency to pursue language learning further by attending out-class activities which can be taken as evidence for autonomous language learning behavior. Regarding item 8 of the questionnaire, 86 % of the students declared that they were willing to catch chances to take part in activities such as pair/group discussion, role-play, etc. Thus, these activities should be implemented more and more in the classroom in order to promote students’ autonomous behavior. 88% of the students claimed that they know their weak points and strengths and accordingly 76% of them stated that they completely know how to choose books, exercises which suit them, neither too difficult nor too easy. According the above mentioned analyses, it can safely be claimed that students in this study were completely autonomous. Table 3 showed the descriptive statistics related to the second part of the questionnaire.

Table 3. Summary of descriptive statistics for learner autonomy (section II)

Items	Number=50					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5	statistic	statistic
12. I study English here due to	6%	8%	6%	18%	62%	4.4600	1.05386
13. think the learner-teacher relationship is that of	0%	6%	10%	24%	60%	4.4000	.90351
14. I think my success or failure in English study is mainly due to	4%	6%	6%	30%	54%	4.2400	1.07968
15. Whether students should design the teaching plan together with teachers or not, my opinion is.	4%	4%	13%	34%	45%	4.3800	.72534
16. the teacher asks questions for us to answer, I would mostly like to:	8%	26%	6%	22%	38%	3.8800	1.25584
17. When I meet a word I don't know, I mainly	4%	22%	50%	18%	6%	3.0800	.80407
18. When I make mistakes in study, I'd usually like the following ones to correct them	4%	19%	20%	4%	53%	3.9400	.87037
19. when I am asked to use technologies that I haven't used before(e. g. internet discussion)	28%	54%	8%	4%	6%	1.8000	.57143
20. I think the following way is most useful in my English study	8%	4%	12%	36%	38%	4.0600	1.13227
21. usually use materials selected	2%	2%	50%	34%	12%	3.5800	.70247

As Table 3 illustrates, the vast majority of the students (62%) prefer to study English in order to get a good job, help to their major or because of their interest of English culture, such as film, sports, music, etc. So, most of the students were both instrumentally and

intrinsically motivated to learn English language. With regard to the item 13, most of the learners (60%) considered teacher-learners relationship as explorer and director which implied that teachers should teach students the elements and principles of autonomous behavior and in fact, they should guide learner toward being autonomous and responsible for their own learning because students cannot become autonomous without the help of the teachers. Therefore, the teachers play a key and central role in this regard. More than half of the students (54%) attributed their failure or success to themselves which means they accepted that they are responsible for their own learning while 22 percent of the students considered teacher as a main factor in this regard. In response to item 15, 79 percent of the learners agreed that students should design the teaching plan together with teachers. In fact, students would rather to have choices about what they learn. With respect to the item 16, most of the students (38%) preferred to join a pair/group discussion when the teacher asks a question. 26 percent of the students preferred to rely on themselves and think and get ready to answer. On the other hand, 22 percent of the students preferred to ask teacher for clarification of the question. In response to item 17, half of the students again preferred to rely on themselves and use contextual clues for guessing the meaning of the unknown words, 22 percent of the students expressed that they would rather to use peer assistant and ask their peers and 18% of the students asserted that they used both peer assistance and dictionaries when encountering unknown words. More than half of the students (57%) preferred to work independently when making mistakes while 20% of the students preferred to be corrected by their classmate and 19% of the students preferred to be corrected by the teacher. Again, more than half of the students (54%) expressed that they would follow the others and learn new thing if they are asked to use technologies that they haven't used before (e. g. internet discussion) and 28% of the students asserted that they would try to challenge themselves and learn new skills. With regard to the way of learning English, 38% of the students preferred to have group discussion, 36% preferred to have classifying, grouping or comparing, 12% of the students preferred to do exercises of grammar, translation, word, etc., 8% of the students would rather to take note, and only 4% of the students used mechanic memory for learning English. Regarding the last item, half of the students preferred those materials which are selected by both teachers and themselves, it implies that students would like to have choices in selecting materials. 34% of the students also expressed that they would like the materials mostly be selected by themselves. By a close look at the table, it can easily be understood that the students generally would like to be active not passive and like the teachers ask for their opinion regarding selecting materials, activities, way of teaching, etc.

The primary purpose of the first research question of the present study was to investigate whether there is any relationship between teachers' perception of learners' autonomy and learners actual level of autonomy or not. To this end, after calculating the descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and percentage of each item of two questionnaires, the correlation analysis was conducted.

Firstly, preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. Kolmlgrov-Smirnoff non-parametric test was

used to see whether the data of the study are normally distributed or not. The sig for teachers' perception questionnaire turned out to be .65 and for the learner autonomy questionnaire was .88 based on the obtained data which indicates that the scores are normally distributed. The assumption of normal distribution is not violated since $p > 0.05$. So, the assumption of normality was met. Table 4 shows the results of normality test.

Table 4. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Pretest	Teachers' Perception	Learners' Autonomy
N	22	50
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	3.64
	Std. Deviation	3.66
	Absolute	.169
Extreme Differences	Positive	.083
	Negative	.083
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.157
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.736
		.586
		.882

*Test distribution is Normal

Furthermore, scatter plot was generated to check the other assumptions of correlation analysis. The first questionnaire measured the teachers' beliefs about learners' autonomy through 37 items based on five-point likert scale. The total mean score was calculated by adding all mean scores of 37 items of the teacher' perception scale (TP1 to TP37). Total mean scores ranged from 3.32 (the lowest) to 3.97 (the highest). The second questionnaire examined learners' autonomy through 21 items based on five-point likert scale. The total mean score was calculated by adding all mean scores of 21 items of the learners' autonomy scale (LA1 to LA 21). Total mean scores ranged from 3 (the lowest) to 4.33 (the highest). Then, the scatter plot which enables the researchers to check for violation of the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity was produced (Pallant , 2005). In addition, the inspection of the scatter plot gives a better idea of the nature of the relationship between the variables (Pallant, 2005). Figure 1 shows the scatter plot for the variables.

As it is clear from the figure, the points are neatly arranged in a cigar shape. In other words, the distribution of scores on the scatter plot established that the relationship between the variables is linear. Furthermore, the direction of the line is upward and from left to right and high mean score on X is associated with high mean score on Y. Thus, it seems there is positive relationship between two variables. After making sure that there was no violation of assumption, Pearson product moment correlation analysis was employed to investigate the relationship between teachers' beliefs about learners' autonomy and learners' actual level of autonomy. The results were summarized in Table 5. The results showed that teachers' beliefs about learners' autonomy positively and significantly correlated with learners' actual level of autonomy.

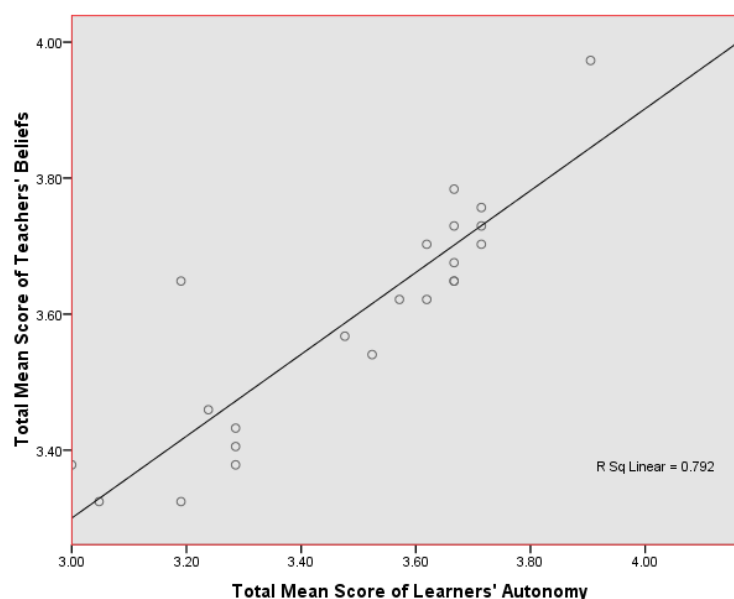


Figure 1. Scatter Plot of the Variables

Table 5. Pearson Correlation between Teachers' Perception and Learners' Autonomy

		Teachers' Perception	Learners' Autonomy
Teachers' Perception	Pearson Correlation	1.00	.766**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	22	50
Learners' Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	.776**	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.0000	
	N	22	50

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between teachers' beliefs about learners' autonomy and learners' actual level of autonomy. Teachers' beliefs about learners' autonomy and learners' actual level of autonomy were positively correlated. The R-observed value was .776 (Table 5). The findings of this study were statistically significant and they were of large value. Based on the effect size criteria developed by Cohen (1988), a Pearson correlation coefficient equal to .77 is considered to be a large one. In other words, the correlation is $r=.776$, which when squared indicates 59.4 per cent shared variance. This is quite a respectable amount of variance explained when compared with a lot of the research conducted in the social sciences. Thus, as indicated above, teachers play a key and central role in promoting learners' autonomous behavior which is one of the most important factors in learning every subject, in general, and mastering foreign language, in particular. Since there was strong positive relationship between teachers' beliefs and learners' autonomy, the first null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between these two variables, can safely be rejected.

The second research question of the present study investigated the factors that contribute to the autonomous behavior of the learners. As previously mentioned,

teachers play an important role in enhancing learners' autonomous behavior. In fact, teachers should not be authoritative but should be facilitator in order to foster autonomy in the classroom and help students to monitor and self-correct themselves. In the same line of argumentation, according to the teachers' responses to the questionnaire, autonomy cannot develop in the teacher-centered classroom using traditional teacher-led way teaching. Furthermore, teachers believed that autonomous learners are better and more successful learners because they know how to self-correct and monitor their own learning. By close look at the mean of the items of the questionnaire, it can easily be understood that all the teachers (100%) asserted that motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated. So, there is a direct relationship between motivation and autonomy.

Furthermore, it was claimed that confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence (90%). Thus, the teacher should promote students' self-confidence and motivation which are prerequisites to autonomy. In this case, teachers can assign activities which encourage students (77.3 %) because those activities in which students are interested can simultaneously increase learners' motivation, self-confidence, and more importantly autonomy.

On the other hand, the results showed that learner autonomy can be promoted when learners can make choices about how to learn (81.9%), can make decision about what to learn and should be encouraged to set individual goal for learning (68.2%), have some choices in the kinds of activities they do (88%), and more importantly, can choose their own learning materials (72%) because learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy (72.8%). Students should also be cooperative because co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy (95.5%) because these activities give them opportunities to learn from each other and understand their standing among the other students (73%). Teachers should also incorporate some kinds of technology in the classroom in order to make students curious and provide them with opportunity to come up with innovation and new ideas and have discussion with their classmate. In the present study, teachers believed that out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet can promote learner autonomy (86.4%). Broadly speaking, most of the teachers admitted that learning how to learn and amalgamating language content and learning process via effective language learning strategy training, (81.9%), learning to work independently by being provided with regular opportunities to do tasks alone (77.3%), developing the ability to monitor one's learning and making self-checking (81.9), and engaging learners in constant evaluation of their progress and making self-exam (63.6%) can be regarded as central and key to learner autonomy. It was also generally accepted that developing autonomy is not bound to any cultural (70%) or Western countries (68.2%). Furthermore, it was stated that language learners of all ages and proficiency levels can develop autonomy.

In a nutshell, it was discovered that autonomous learners are more successful language learners because they know how to learn, how to rely on themselves, and to be responsible for their own learning, they can monitor and self-correct themselves, besides,

they are more motivated and have more self-confidence which are integral elements of mastering any foreign language. On the other hand, the role of teachers cannot be neglected in this regard. In fact, teachers play the most essential role in enhancing learners' autonomous behavior because students believe in their teachers. Briefly speaking, teachers should be supporter or facilitator and involve learners in the classroom activities and should give them opportunities to make choices about design of teaching plan, the kind of activities, the materials, how and what to learn and so on in order to motivate and encourage learners to develop positive attitude toward language learning which indirectly contribute to autonomy. Furthermore, the teachers should help students to set their own goal, to incorporate reflective lessons and technology such as internet into the content of the teaching, to encourage learners to keep portfolio or diaries, to help learners to monitor and self-evaluate themselves constantly, and more importantly implement the elements of cooperative learning in the classroom and encourage learners to share their new ideas with their friends, to have interaction with their classmate, to compare their own standing with their friends, etc.

DISCUSSION

According to Joshi (2011), "The world of pedagogy is shifting rapidly from the authority to democracy since 1960s and the target of teaching/learning should be the learner autonomy" (p.25). The findings of the present study indicated that there exist a strong and positive relationship between teachers' beliefs about learners' autonomy and learners' actual level of autonomy. It implies that teachers as a facilitator of learning have a remarkable role in promoting learners' autonomous behavior.

Furthermore, some factors such as giving learners choices with regard to what to learn, the kinds of materials, teaching plan, cooperating with their classmate and so on were identified to contribute to autonomy, monitoring and self-correction. The results of the current study agree with those of Nasri, EslamiRasekh, Dastjerdi, and Amirian in a way that teachers asserted that promoting learners' autonomy is of utmost importance. The findings also are in accordance with Joshi's (2011) study, which shows that there is positive relationship between teachers and students' attitude toward autonomy.

Furthermore, the results are congruent with Nunan's (2000) statement that critical outside activities can have the tremendous effects on language learning. Also, in this study, as previously mentioned, outside tasks and activities proved to increase learners' autonomy.

Contrary to the statement of Ho and Crookall (1995) that autonomy is related to the context of specific culture, in the present study, teachers stated that autonomy is not bound to the culture. The results of the study are also similar to those of Little (1995) and Voller (1997) which showed that autonomy does not mean learning without the help of the teachers and teachers have important role in promoting learners' autonomy.

Tholin's (2009) study also lent support to the finding of the present study. He also declared that teachers and learners should have mutual relationship for developing

autonomy and in fact, teachers should redirect “their teaching towards self-directed learning and on how their own experiences as autonomous language learners can give character to the teaching that they themselves carry out” (p.183).

CONCLUSION

Two types of questionnaires were used as the instruments for the purpose of data collection. 22 lectures of English major of Islamic Azad University of Bandar Abbas and 50 undergraduate students at semester 5 and 6 served as the participants of this study. After data collection, analysis was done. The correlation analysis was conducted to discover the relationship between two variables of the study.

The results showed that there was highly strong and positive relationship between teachers’ beliefs about learners’ autonomy and learners’ actual level of autonomy. Further, the results demonstrated that teachers as the facilitators have undeniable role in promoting learners’ autonomy. Furthermore, several factors were identified as the most important factors contributing to learners’ autonomy. Some of these factors were involving students in the class, giving them opportunity to make decision about the content of material, the activities, teaching plan, the kind of evaluation, and so on. More importantly, it was found out that students should be provided with opportunity to learn from each other and have cooperative learning in order to develop their autonomy.

The present study has both pedagogical and theoretical implications for teachers and learners. The results of the study indicated that autonomous learners are more effective learners. So, it is necessary for teachers to be aware and to increase their knowledge about how to train autonomous learners. In this regard, it can be suggested to Teacher Training Program to hold some workshops in order to increase teachers’ knowledge and skill for improving learners’ autonomy. It was also seen in this study that teachers by encouraging and motivating students can increase students’ self-confidence which directly affect autonomy. Furthermore, teachers should act as a supporter or facilitator and avoid teacher-centered classroom and guide learners toward being more autonomous by giving them some chances for group discussion, making choices about material, activities, evaluation method, etc. To enhance learners’ actual level of autonomy, teachers should assign students some outside tasks and let students to preview the lessons and do the task alone.

Furthermore, in today world, technology such as internet has become indispensable part of every student’s life. Thus, teachers should implement technology in the classroom and asked them to use technology in order to discover new innovation and ideas with their classmate through collaborative learning. Learners themselves are also the main factor for developing autonomy. They should rely on themselves for monitoring, self-checking, and self-correcting themselves. They should set a target for their own learning and be both intrinsically and instrumentally motivated to reach the target. They should keep some portfolio or diaries for promoting their autonomy. They should engage themselves in a constant evaluation of their progress. They should grab the chances in the classroom in order to have interaction with other students. Furthermore, they should do their best

to solve the problem or to do tasks alone in order to learn how to learn independently and become responsible for their own learning. By considering the aforementioned points, teachers and learners can help to develop autonomy. Material developers should also design the course books in a way that motivate language learners toward autonomy and include different tasks which challenge students to do the task independently. They should also include some semi-exams in the course books in order to encourage learners toward self-evaluation and self-exam before the real one. With regard to the limitations of the current study, some suggestions for the future studies can make.

The present study was done with only 22 lecturers and 50 undergraduate students. Any possible study can be conducted in a larger scale in order to enhance the generalizability of the results. Further, a similar study is needed to be carried out in the ESL context and its results be compared with the results of the current study to confirm these findings.

The present study was done in the Bandar Abbas province, any further study can be done in other provinces such as Tehran to see whether the same results will obtain. This study was done with undergraduate students whose technical major is English; another study is needed to be done with graduate students or students who have different majors. The present study was only based on the quantitative data, any further research can be done based on triangulation method using both quantitative and qualitative data. Moreover, any future study can take individual difference variables such as age, major, personality type, and so on into account to investigate the issue under investigation better.

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