



INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF LEARNER AUTONOMY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

Dr. Nargis Mari drnargismari@sbbusba.edu.pk	Assistant Professor, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazirabad
Bakhtawer Daudpota bakhtawer@smiu.edu.pk	Lecturer, Sindh Madresatul Islam University, Karachi
Kiran Shirazi kiranshirazi@smiu.edu.pk	Lecturer, Sindh Madresatul Islam University, Karachi
Naima Abbas Khoso Naimaabbas2003@gmail.com	BS English, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazirabad

Abstract

This study investigates the role of learner autonomy on English language learning among undergraduate BS English students at a public sector university located in Sindh Pakistan. The present degree of learner autonomy in English classrooms and its effect on enhancing students' English proficiency are investigated using a quantitative research approach. The Language Learner Autonomy Scale (LLAS), a 26 item test that assesses motivation, self-control, independent learning, and reflective abilities, is used to gather data from 143 participants. To identify patterns in learner autonomy, descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were analyzed using SPSS. The findings indicate a relatively high level of learner autonomy among students, reflected in strong motivation, positive learning attitudes, and the use of autonomous learning strategies, despite persistent challenges related to self-regulation and time management. Learner autonomy supports self-initiated and strategic learning practices and contributes to the development of lifelong learning skills, which are closely linked to improved English language proficiency. In the context of Pakistani higher education, the study highlights the importance of systematic learner training and active instructor facilitation to further strengthen autonomy. However, the findings are subject to limitations, particularly the focus on a single institution and reliance on self-reported data. To foster more effective language learning outcomes, the integration of autonomy-enhancing activities into the curriculum is recommended.

Keywords: *Autonomy, English Language Acquisition, Learner Autonomy.*

Corresponding Author: Dr. Nargis Mari (Assistant Professor Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazirabad)
Email: drnargismari@sbbusba.edu.pk

1. Introduction

The concept of learner autonomy emerged in the 1970s as a key dimension of contemporary educational philosophy, particularly within language learning. It centers on learners' capacity to assume responsibility for planning, managing, and evaluating their own learning processes. Foundational contributions to this field were made by scholars such as Benson (2005), Benson and Voller (1997), Broady and Kenning (1996), Gremmo and Riley (1995), Holec (1981), Lamb (2001), and Littlewood (1999). Their work draws on socio-cultural theory, self-regulation, teacher development, and motivation research.

Holec (1981) is widely considered the originator of the term, defining autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." Benson (2011) later refined this perspective by emphasizing the learner's capacity and responsibility rather than merely their ability or willingness to "take charge." This shift highlights learners' active involvement in setting their goals, choosing materials, selecting methods, monitoring progress, and assessing outcomes (Thansoulas, 2024; Holec, 1981).

Gardner and Miller (2002) argue that the diversity of definitions arises from cultural, contextual, and terminological variations, making learner autonomy an inherently subjective concept. According to Zhuang (2022, 2023), the rise of autonomy in the 1970s represented a movement toward student-centered pedagogy, reshaping the teacher's role from knowledge provider to facilitator.

Dickinson (1987) associates' autonomy with self-instruction through materials such as printed texts or audio programs, while Little (1991) describes it more broadly as learning that occurs without direct teacher control. White (2003, in Benson, 2006) expands the notion to include online and technology-enhanced learning, and Benson (2006) views self-direction as an overall attitude toward learning rather than a specific set of actions.

Learner autonomy has theoretical, psychological, and political dimensions. Holec (1981), as noted by Grima (2007), considered autonomy part of educational reforms aimed at encouraging independent and responsible participation in society. Cotterall (1995) and Palfreyman (2003) argue that autonomy enhances language learning quality, supports democratic ideals, and enables lifelong learning. Knight (1996) emphasizes that autonomy is not synonymous with learning in isolation; rather, it involves guided independence based on learners' needs. McNair (1997) notes that autonomous learning may be challenging in higher education, as students bring diverse prior experiences that institutions do not always acknowledge.

In practical terms, autonomy involves research skills, self-motivation, and informed decision-making (Awaya et al., 2003). Thomas and Reinders (2010) observe that much autonomous learning takes place outside the classroom, either individually or collaboratively, without direct teacher supervision. Candy (1991) describes autonomy as requiring learners to develop strategies for improving their own learning abilities, whereas

Gibbs et al. (1992) view it as engaging with academic tasks independently by conducting research and locating information. Key elements of formal instruction that support autonomy include clarifying goals, setting objectives, providing feedback, and sharing learning outcomes (Gibbs et al., 1992).

In summary, learner autonomy originated with Holec's work in the 1970s and has since evolved into a complex, multifaceted construct that underpins democratic education, lifelong learning, and self-regulated language development. Its varied interpretations, cultural influences, and emphasis on learner responsibility and teacher support underscore its continued relevance and the need for ongoing pedagogical innovation.

2. What is Learner Autonomy?

Trebbi argues that to understand learner autonomy, one must first clarify the concept of freedom, since autonomy presupposes a degree of freedom (Lamb & Reinders, 2008). According to Trebbi (2008), the meaning of freedom differs across cultures, and absolute freedom is impossible because social structures and regulations shape human behavior. Our backgrounds, experiences, and sociocultural environments shape our perceptions and beliefs. Trebbi (2008) notes that the real question is not whether we are free, but whether we are constrained and to what extent by internal and external factors. He applies this idea to learner autonomy, suggesting that autonomy is similarly limited by personal and institutional constraints. Educational systems in many societies impose restrictions on both teachers and students that may inhibit the development of autonomy (Trebbi, 2008, p. 36). Despite these limitations, it is still possible to expand the boundaries created by such constraints in order to promote more autonomous language learning.

The literature uses several related terms, including learner independence, self-direction, independent learning, and autonomous learning. While these terms differ slightly in emphasis, they all revolve around the core definition provided by Holec: autonomy as, the ability to take charge of one's own learning (1981, p. 3). Although autonomy serves as the underlying factor, other aspects of autonomy may be the subject of sub-definitions and references that emerge from the root. For example, the subdivision of autonomous learning emphasizes the need to develop long-term learner strategies which will be of use in current or future learning situations where a teacher may not be available (Macaro, 1997, p. 167). Meanwhile, student-centered learning emphasizes theories of individual learner differences and proposes a learning environment which might best cater for those differences (Macaro, 1997). Rather than defining autonomy in terms of what it is, Each claims that It is not self-teaching or learning without a teacher; it does not suggest that a teacher's initiative or intervention is prohibited; it is not a new methodology that teachers apply to students, it is not a single, easily recognized behavior, and it is not a permanent state attained by students (as cited in Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012, p.4).

Table 1: List of learner autonomy (Borg& Al-Busaidi, 2012, p. 4)

1. The concept of autonomy is based on capacity.
2. Being autonomous means that the learner is prepared to assume accountability for their own education.
3. Students' willingness and ability to assume such responsibility are not always innate.
4. Absolute autonomy is a noble ideal
5. Autonomy comes in different levels.
6. Autonomy levels are inconsistent and changeable.
7. Autonomy is more than just placing students in situations where they must be independent.
9. Encouraging independence involves more than just instructional methods.
10. The classroom is not the only setting in which autonomy can occur.
11. In addition to its individual aspect, autonomy has a social component.
12. There is a political and psychological component to the fostering of autonomy.
13. Different cultures have different ideas about what autonomy means.

According to Sinclair's definition, learner autonomy does not always mean that students should pursue their studies independently. For autonomy to be fully successful, collaboration with other community members are essential. As Smith and Palfreyman collaboration with others and the sociocultural context are significant aspects of education and our lives (Smith & Palfreyman, 2003. p. 2). From this angle, a connection between learner autonomy and the "Communities of Learning" hypothesis can be made (Wenger, 2006). The Communities of Learning approach states that social connection is essential to language acquisition because it fosters the development of conceptual abilities, which can only be attained by actively participating in one's community. Individuals participate in group discussions and events, support one another, and exchange information while pursuing their interests in their field. They establish connections that allow them to share knowledge (Wenger, 2006).

Autonomous learners with social skills are necessary for this kind of social engagement because they will be able to actively participate in community events. Accordingly, some linguists, such as Boud (Palfreyman & Smith, 2003, p. 4), support interdependence rather than independence for a more successful achievement of autonomy, even though independence relates to students' capacity to be independent of the teacher. The capacity of learners to work with others to establish and accomplish goals has emerged as a significant advantage. Working together with other members of the community and

collaborating with them is consistent with the socio-cultural theories that Vygotsky (1978) inspired.

Autonomy requires some degree of freedom from two basic kinds of constraints: internal and external (Benson, 2008, p. 18). Internal constraint relates to psychological capacities such as setting personal goals from free will for the future and pursuing those goals; capacities which a person can exercise control over. External constraints, however, relate to 19 elements of autonomy which should be available from external surroundings, such as living in a free society where individuals are granted rights and freedoms to make decisions for themselves and have options to choose from. In other words, individuals must strive to lead autonomous lives and society must strive to respect the freedoms that such lives require (Benson, 2008, p. 18). Furthermore, Benson describes three viewpoints that define autonomy as political, psychological, and technical (Benson, 2003, 2003). Benson also claims that the technical perspective is related to the social, cognitive, and metacognitive abilities that students utilize to educate themselves on their own without guidance. The motivation and attitude of students that encourage them to assume accountability for their own learning are related to psychological perspectives. Giving students authority over their learning process and the choice of content is related to ideological perspectives. While the literature presents a wide range of interpretations of student autonomy, there is recognition of the fundamental characteristics of autonomous learners, which include understanding the goals and objectives of their education, taking ownership of their education, participating actively and proactively in learning activities both inside and outside of the classroom, and using metacognitive abilities to track and assess their own learning progress. Additionally, everyone agrees that these student efforts require a strong sense of enthusiasm and an optimistic view of learning.

3. Why Autonomy Matters?

The primary justification for allowing students to be independent rather than dependent on teachers is that learning activities that place them in real-world contexts are more successful than those that take place in a classroom. There is also the claim that students who are autonomous are inherently driven. If learners are proactively committed to their learning, the problem of motivation is by definition solved (Little, 2020). Such students, he argues, have developed the reflective and attitudinal resources to overcome temporary motivational obstacles (Little, 2020). Motivated, self-directed learners acquire the language by using it successfully, which helps them to acquire the target language's receptive and productive skills far more quickly than non-self-directed learners in a traditional, teacher-centered classroom setting.

A philosophical basis for giving students autonomy is made in the literature, according to which everyone has the fundamental right to freedom. Students should have an input in what they learn and how they learn it, according to the idea, if they are the ones

who engage in the learning process and assume responsibility for their education. As stated by Macaro, this kind of learning freedom encompasses complete access to learning resources, goal-setting, curriculum design, progress, and methodology. (Macaro, 1997, p. 168). It means assuming responsibility for one's education and all of its associated obligations. Being independent of teachers is one example of an external aspect that does not equate to complete autonomy. For instance, unlike students in typical classrooms, distance learners do not have teacher supervision; yet, this mode of instruction "only enables autonomy of speed and rhythm, not of objectives or content" (Macaro, 1997, p. 169). Another widely held belief is that achieving complete autonomy with all of its principles is extremely challenging, and in my opinion, overly unrealistic, particularly in Pakistan, more specifically in the Sindh setting. Alternatively, we could discuss how different cultural contexts encourage different forms and amounts of autonomy. According to Macaro (1997), "functional autonomy" is divided into three subcategories: "autonomy of choice and action," "autonomy of language competence," and "autonomy of language learning competence." Autonomy of language competence occurs as a result of having mastered an L2 enough, which allows learners to stand on their own feet and proceed with their learning without depending on others for help, such as the teacher in the classroom. Autonomy of language learning competence, however, occurs when learners acquire cognitive and meta-cognitive language learning skills which they can reproduce in other similar situations and transfer these skills into learning or studying other subjects, such as a third foreign language. In a nutshell, this means acquiring the knowledge of how to learn and what strategies to employ for learning the target subject matter. To illustrate the relationship between cognitive skills and meta-cognitive skills, Macaro says: Therefore, a meta-cognitive (also known as planning or procedural) strategy may be determining forward of time how much time to spend to dictionary use in a timed exam, as opposed to a cognitive strategy, which is a learner using a dictionary for words she does not know (Macaro, pp. 170-171).

Making long-term or short-term decisions about learning objectives, content selection, motivating concerns, and the application of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to achieve the goals is known as autonomy of choice or action. Giving students the capacity to develop a coherent argument as to why they are learning a foreign language even if they may not have the choice of not learning that language is one way that Macaro (1997) defines this type of autonomy (Macaro, 1997, p. 171). This viewpoint, in my opinion, is inherently contradictory, as while students are not given the option to choose whether or not to learn a subject, it also aims to provide them the autonomy to justify why they should be doing something that has been forced upon them. This is theoretically at odds with the widely recognized definition of learner autonomy, which is "the ability to

take charge of one's own learning"(Holec, 1981, p. 3), which holds that learners must voluntarily take control of their education in all respects.

They choose the material, establish their goals and objectives, and manage their learning process. They decide what strategies and approaches will be used to accomplish their goals, and they also use metacognitive abilities to track their progress—or lack of them—and adjust their approach accordingly. Legenhausen makes a curious distinction between students as learners" and "students who speak as themselves (Murray, Gao, & Lamb, 2011, p. 17). By contrasting two classrooms—one in Germany and the other in Denmark—he demonstrates how Danish students who practice independent learning have significantly greater and more acceptable language use and communicative value than German students who follow textbooks. He argues that closing the gap between the classroom and the outside world by allowing students to express their identities, likes, dislikes, interests, and hobbies will make them more successful and motivated to use the language than keeping them in a classroom setting with artificial learning activities. Scrivener demonstrates the importance of giving students the freedom to express themselves.

Student: I feel awful. Last week, my grandfather die and I am...

Teacher: Since it happened in the past, say "died" instead of "die." (Scrivener, 1994).

It goes without saying that before students can become autonomous, teachers must also have an autonomous mindset. In addition to being considered as learners, students should also be viewed as human beings with feelings, emotions, and experiences that can serve as a rich, genuine source of knowledge in a self-directed environment. For instance, reducing learners' anxiety and fostering a relaxed, non-threatening learning environment are two of Suggestopedia's core goals. Environment in accordance with the humanitarian perspective (Lozanov, 1978). Similarly, according to Little (n.d.), a teacher's job in neo-Vygotskian psychology is to foster an environment where students can be independent so they can grow more independent. Oxford (1990) supports that teachers can play a significant role in instructing or helping, but that "the learner themselves carries the ultimate responsibility" (p. 23).

One of the primary topics of discussion in the literature is the connection between learner autonomy and motivation. The concepts of autonomy and motivation are closely related. According to Murray, et al 2011, Gao, & Lamb (2011), Ushioda noted that "we can never say which comes first, autonomy or motivation" (p. 43). Numerous linguists who work with pupils in the Middle East will speak to the widespread lack of enthusiasm among them. Since motivation and learner autonomy are practically mutually exclusive, we cannot realistically discuss either in the absence of motivation. As stated by Ushioda (Murray, Gao & Lamb, 2011, p. 43). Allowing students to freely voice their preferences

and dislikes fosters motivation and independent thinking. However, in the modern Pakistani Sindh context, classroom exercises are textbook-based, which leaves little opportunity for individual expression or authentic language use in communication. Consequently, motivation declines.

4. Nunan's Five-Level Learner Autonomy Model

An organized framework for encouraging student's autonomy in language education, especially for English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL), is provided by David Nunan's (1997) five-level model, which is described in *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning* (eds. Benson & Voller). From instructor dependency to self-directed learning, a model leads students through five developmental stages: awareness, involvement, intervention, creation, and transcendence. To build metacognitive skills, each step includes a double check process that strikes a balance between internal reflection (such as self-assessment) and external validation (such as instructor or material assistance). Each of the five phases in Nunan's model increases learner responsibility:

1. **Awareness:** Students recognize their preferred learning methods and educational objectives. **Check again:** (1) Go over the external goals, such as "Learn verb tenses." (2) Consider your own fit (for example, "Do I prefer practice drills?"). Example: After looking over a syllabus, indicating a preference for visual aids.
2. **Involvement:** Students make decisions by selecting from the options offered. **Check again:** (1) Consider the criteria when evaluating possibilities. (2) Evaluate individual motivation. Example: Deciding on a speaking topic, such as culture, and then demonstrating its applicability.
3. **Intervention:** Within predetermined parameters, learners alter assignments or objectives. **Check again:** (1) Evaluate the task's appropriateness. (2) Modify in light of one's own assessment. Example: Using a rubric to self-check and personalizing a writing prompt.
4. **Creation:** Students create their own assignments and objectives. **Check again:** (1) Make plans based on more general goals. (2) Make adjustments while performing. For instance, writing a conversation for a real-world situation and having others review it.
5. **Transcendence:** Students develop self-control by using their skills in practical situations. **Check again:** (1) Connection to long-term objectives. (2) Assess yourself using input from others. Example: Reflecting in a journal while using a language foreign to you.

A fundamental component of language education, learner autonomy—which has its roots in Holec's (1981) vision and has been expanded upon by academics such as Nunan, Benson, Macaro, and Blin—allows students to move through their studies with direction and autonomy. With its "double check" process of external validation and internal reflection, Nunan's (1997) five-level model provides a useful framework for

encouraging autonomy in the classroom, leading to transcendence, where students relate academic knowledge to real-world situations. However, in culturally diverse environments like Sindh, Pakistan, where teacher-centered norms and resource constraints can hinder success, its use presents difficulties. Despite these challenges, learner autonomy's focus on motivation and self-directed learning has enormous potential to revolutionize language instruction by inspiring teachers to create settings where students flourish as introspective, lifelong learner.

This study employs a carefully chosen quantitative research design to evaluate the complex function of learner autonomy in English language acquisition among undergraduate students at a public sector university located in Sindh Pakistan. At its foundation, quantitative research focuses on the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data in order to identify patterns, connections, and trends that can be applied to a larger population. This approach is perfectly aligned with the study's objectives since it allows for the objective measurement of factors such as the current state of students' autonomous learning in English language learning classrooms at a public sector university in Sindh Pakistan, and the contributions of learner autonomy to the enhancement of English proficiency levels among BS English students. Researchers can collect measurable insights from a representative sample of individuals using standardized methods such as questionnaires, allowing researchers to conduct statistical analyses that lead to robust, evidence-based conclusions.

The decision to use this approach arises from its inherent strengths in answering research questions aimed at quantifying phenomena and testing theories. For example, rather than delving into subjective narratives, which may be more suited to qualitative methods, this quantitative framework allows for the use of descriptive and inferential statistics to evaluate how autonomy affects language acquisition outcomes. It also provides dependability and replicability, which are especially important in an academic setting where findings may affect educational policies or pedagogical practices at institutions such as at public university, Nawabshah. This decision is supported by a growing corpus of empirical research in the subject, which has successfully used quantitative approaches to investigate learner autonomy in English language learning environments. For instance. Significant predictive relationships between learner autonomy and achievement in English as a foreign language (EFL) were found in more recent studies, such as those conducted by Razmjoo (2011), which used quantitative designs incorporating statistical modeling. Furthermore, in order to measure the degree of autonomy among Iranian EFL learners, Karimi and Atai (2014) used a quantitative methodology with extensive questionnaires, highlighting the method's effectiveness in detecting both obstacles and enablers of independent learning. These examples demonstrate how quantitative research not only reflects the empirical reality of learner autonomy but also speaks to the human side of

education by giving teachers data-driven solutions to help students take control of their educational journeys. By adopting this perspective, the study hopes to make a significant contribution to the current discussion on encouraging independence in language learning settings by giving teachers evidence-based methods to assist students in taking control of their educational paths. By using this perspective, the study hopes to make a significant contribution to the current discussion about encouraging independence in language learning settings.

5. Population and Sampling

The target population of present study consists of undergraduate students enrolled in Parts 1 and 2 of the BS English programs at a public sector university in Sindh Pakistan. This population is chosen because of their active participation in English language acquisition, which is consistent with the research aims.

5.1. Sampling/strategy and size

A sample of 143 participants is selected to ensure statistical significance and representativeness. To reduce sample bias and improve findings' generalizability, a probability sampling technique, specifically stratified random sampling, will be used. The population is separated into two groups based on their academic level: Part 1 and Part 2 students. Random samples will be taken proportionally from each stratum to correctly represent the population's composition.

5.2. Research Instrument

This study utilized the Language Learner Autonomy Scale (LLAS) developed by Cao Thi Phuong Dzung and Pho Phuong Dzung (2024), a validated instrument published in the {Science & Technology Development Journal - Social Sciences & Humanities} (2024), titled "Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: The Development of a Rigorous Measuring Scale.". The questionnaire is intended to assess various aspects of learner autonomy in the context of language acquisition. Assessing learner autonomy among English language learners. The LLAS is a reliable and valid 26-item questionnaire that assesses self-initiation (motivation, attitudes, and learning) and self-regulation (goal setting, resource selection, and planning).

The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) and was developed from previous instruments (Nguyen, 2012; Macaskill & Taylor, 2010; Ruelens, 2019). The LLAS was chosen because of its brief design, emphasis on language learners, and psychometric rigor, making it suited for classroom-based research. It was administered via paper-based format to 145 English major students at a university who are currently enrolled in Part 1 and Part 2 of the BS English Program at a public sector university in Sindh Pakistan, with explicit instructions supplied.

5.3. Data Collection Procedure

In order to examine learner autonomy in English language acquisition, the Language Learner Autonomy Scale (LLAS) was administered efficiently while maintaining ethical compliance and participants' clarity. Ethical approval is granted prior to data collection. This action made sure that all institutional rules and moral principles—such as voluntary involvement, informed consent, and confidentiality—is followed questionnaire was administered among students. To maximize response rates and reduce non-response bias, the LLAS, a 26-item questionnaire measuring self-initiation and self-regulation in language learners, was given to English major students, specifically those who are currently enrolled in Part 1 and Part 2 BS English Program. Questionnaire administered during scheduled class sessions. Two weeks were allotted for data collection, giving participants enough time to carefully fill out the questionnaire. Participants were given explicit written and verbal instructions on the goal of the study as well as how to answer the 5-point Likert scale (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree). The average time to complete the questionnaire, which was distributed via (paper-based), was fifteen minutes.

5.4. Data Analysis

In order to examine learner autonomy in English language acquisition, the Language Learner Autonomy Scale (LLAS, 2024) data collection method is described in this section. The data is interpreted using descriptive statistics, and the analysis is carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version).

5.5. Data Processing and Analysis

The LLAS data is compiled and imported into SPSS for analysis following the collection of responses from the English Department students, particularly those currently enrolled in Part 1 and Part II at a public sector university. To make statistical processing easier, each questionnaire item was numerically coded and evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree). Before analysis, the data was processed to ensure accuracy by looking for missing or invalid responses.

To determine how much participants' levels of autonomy varied within the sample, descriptive statistics such as the mean, median, and standard deviation were computed for each of the six LLAS subscales (motivation and attitudes, making efforts to learn, identifying needs and learning goals, selecting resources and planning learning activities, plus two additional self-initiation subscales) and the overall autonomy score variability of responses. Together, these measurements provided a thorough knowledge of learner autonomy by identifying trends and variances in participants' self-initiation and self-regulation.

The results of the data analysis and interpretation of the 143 participants' responses are presented in this chapter. Examining learners' motivation, autonomy, and attitudes about learning English was the primary goal of this investigation. To provide an overview

of the general trends in the data, descriptive statistics such as the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation values are displayed. A five-point Likert scale was used for evaluating the responses (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree).

5.6. Learner Autonomy Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for items pertaining to learners' openness to new experiences, readiness to learn, self-motivation, ability to work independently and cooperatively, and capacity to organize, monitor, and evaluate their learning are shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Learner Autonomy

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am open to new ways of doing familiar things	143	1.00	5.00	3.56	1.18
I enjoy new learning experiences	143	1.00	5.00	4.45	0.80
I enjoy being set a challenge	143	1.00	5.00	3.92	0.95
I am happy working on my own	143	1.00	5.00	4.36	0.97
I have a willingness to learn	143	1.00	44.00	4.25	3.51
I have a positive attitude towards learning English	143	1.00	5.00	4.38	0.80
I motivate myself to learn without external factors	143	1.00	5.00	3.41	1.15
I am able to work cooperatively in pairs or groups	143	1.00	5.00	4.05	1.01
I am able to take part in classroom interactions and discussions	143	1.00	5.00	4.07	0.95
I am able to seek help or support from my peers	143	1.00	5.00	3.84	0.98
I am able to avoid procrastination	143	1.00	5.00	3.27	1.18
I am able to stick with tasks even when they are difficult	143	1.00	5.00	3.65	1.21
I am able to meet deadlines	142	1.00	5.00	3.58	1.13
I am able to take responsibility for my learning	143	1.00	5.00	4.22	1.01
I am able to set my own learning goals	143	1.00	54.00	4.53	4.31

I am able to identify my own needs (e.g., why I want to learn English)	143	1.00	5.00	4.15	1.02
I am able to identify my own learning problems and ways to solve them	143	1.00	55.00	4.41	4.36
I am able to identify my strengths and weaknesses and structure my learning accordingly	142	1.00	5.00	3.50	1.14
I am able to evaluate to what extent I have achieved my learning goals	142	1.00	5.00	3.80	0.97
I am able to work with various materials and resources to enhance learning	143	1.00	5.00	4.09	0.93
I am able to find information about new topics on my own	143	1.00	5.00	4.20	1.02
I am able to identify and develop learning strategies (e.g., word association, repetition, grammar tables)	143	1.00	5.00	3.84	1.06
I demonstrate independence from my teachers	143	1.00	5.00	3.55	1.03
I am able to study by myself	143	1.00	5.00	4.23	1.12
I am able to plan where I want to learn (e.g., classroom, home, library)	143	1.00	5.00	4.00	1.21

5.7. Computation of Variables

The individual questionnaire items were compiled into broader variables that represented important learner autonomy aspects in order to better interpret the data. Among these calculated variables are:

Table 3 Computing variables

Variable	Items Included	Description
1. Openness to Learning and Attitude	Items 1, 2, 3, 6	Reflects students' readiness for new exper challenges, and their general attitude toward lea English.
2. Motivation and Willingness to Learn	Items 5, 7, 14	Measures internal motivation, willingness to learn, and responsibility for learning.
3. Independent Learning Ability	Items 4, 15, 23, 24	Captures learners' ability to study independently, set goals, and work without teacher dependence.
4. Cooperative and Social Learning Skills	Items 8, 9, 10	Evaluates learners' ability to collaborate, interact, and seek support from peers.
5. Self-Regulation and Time Management	Items 11, 12, 13, 26	Assesses learners' ability to manage time, avoid procrastination, persist with difficult tasks, and plan learning activities.
6. Reflective and Strategic Learning Skills	Items 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22	Measures self-reflection, awareness of strengths and weaknesses, and ability to use effective learning strategies and resources.

The average of each variable's component components was used to determine its mean. These variables are examined in the sections that follow, and the results are connected to the research questions of the study.

5.8. Computation of Average Mean

To analyze the data more effectively, the 26 questionnaire items were grouped into six key variables reflecting different dimensions of learner autonomy. Each variable's average mean was computed to provide a clearer picture of learners' overall tendencies in each domain. The average mean for each variable was calculated using the following formula.

➤ (Average Mean = $\frac{\text{Sum of items}}{\text{Number of items in the variables}}$)

This stands for mean scores of all items under one variable are computed and divided by the total number of those items.

Table 4 Variable-Wise Data Analysis and Interpretation

	Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1	Openness to Learning and attitude	143	1.00	5.00	4.45	4.80
2	Motivation and Willingness to Learn	143	1.00	5.00	4.25	3.51

3	Independent Learning Ability	143	1.00	5.00	4.53	4.31
6	Cooperative and Social Learning Skills	143	1.00	5.00	4.07	0.95
7	Self-Regulation and Time Management	143	1.00	5.00	3.65	1.21
8	Reflective and Strategic Learning Skills	143	1.00	5.00	4.41	4.36

The results in table 4 show that language learners have a positive outlook toward studying English and a high degree of openness toward learning it. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statements indicating curiosity, openness to trying new things, and appreciation of learning challenges, with an average mean of 4.45. This implies that most students approach learning with enthusiasm, openness, and flexibility. Learners who have a mean score higher than 4.0 are more at ease experimenting and being creative in their English language learning methods. They are willing to attempt new things, experiment with diverse approaches, and view difficulties as chances for personal development rather than barriers. Since autonomous learners are usually self-initiated, flexible, and receptive to different learning situations, such attitudes are essential for fostering learner autonomy.

Their positive attitude is indicative of intrinsic motivation, an attitude in which students participate in activities due to their own interests and fulfillment rather than outside pressure. This result suggests that English language learning environment is encouraging and supportive, enabling learners to develop their curiosity and self-assurance. Learners are more willing to take charge of their education, look for resources on their own, and critically evaluate their development when they are open to new concepts and experiences. Therefore, openness to learning serves as a basis for independent behavior, encouraging risk-taking, active engagement, and lifetime learning habits that are crucial for long-term language development.

The findings of the data also indicate that English language learners are highly motivated and willing to learn English. The majority of respondents generally agreed with the statements evaluating their enthusiasm and determination to learn new things, shown by the average mean score of 4.25. This shows that learners are not just motivated to learn English but also understand how crucial it is to their academic success and possible future careers.

Participants show a strong readiness to participate in learning activities, majority of participants are acquiring the fundamental characteristics of autonomous individuals—those who are able to plan, supervise, and control their own learning activity.

Data suggests that learners may become naturally driven learners if self-reflection, goal-setting, and self-reward systems are encouraged. In order to achieve linguistic competence and maintain lifelong learning habits, it is essential to strengthen intrinsic motivation since it fosters long-term engagement, resilience, and self-direction.

Furthermore, findings of the data reflect an excellent degree of autonomy in monitoring their educational procedures. With an average mean score of approximately 4.53, the findings indicate that participants are generally comfortable studying alone, establishing their own learning objectives, and maintaining their progress without continuous teacher supervision. Students' comfort and confidence in self-directed learning environments are demonstrated by the high mean scores which shows participants can autonomously plan their learning pathways and are aware of their academic goals. These results show how fundamental autonomous learning characteristics, such as self-reliance, goal-setting, and self-management, have developed. A key component of learner autonomy is the capacity for independent learning, which enables students to take charge, make wise choices, and take ownership of their educational results. As data indicates the majority of learners have already acquired critical abilities like self-evaluation, planning, and monitoring, which enable them to successfully navigate their studies without continual guidance from teachers. However, encouraging this capacity further through guided autonomy—for instance, by incorporating goal-oriented assignments, independent projects, and reflective journals—may boost students' self-assurance and consistency in independent learning. In addition to promoting academic success, developing these skills equips learners for lifelong learning, which is essential in the fast-paced educational and professional environments of today.

The results of the present study further show that ESL learners at a public sector university demonstrate a high degree of social and cooperative learning competency. The mean scores, which are constantly near 4.07, show that students actively participate in group-based learning activities, peer collaboration, and classroom discussions, findings indicate that learners are both comfortable and inspired by interactive learning environments. This pattern demonstrates that learners see peer collaboration as an essential part of learning a language, recognizing that interaction promotes communication, idea sharing, and a deeper comprehension of the subject matter.

Further the results indicate that participants possess moderate levels of self-regulation and time management skills, which are essential components of learner autonomy. With an average mean of 3.50, the data suggest that while many learners are capable of organizing their studies, maintaining consistency and discipline remains a challenge. Data highlights difficulties in managing time effectively and resisting distractions. Some participants struggle with perseverance when faced with challenging tasks. These findings point to a need for improvement in self-control, persistence, and task management, which are critical to sustaining long-term learning goals.

The data suggest that learners exhibit strong reflective and strategic learning abilities, a core dimension of learner autonomy. With an average mean of approximately

4.00, participants generally demonstrate the ability to evaluate their learning processes, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and apply effective learning strategies. Findings show that learners possess a high level of metacognitive awareness and initiative. They can assess their needs and adopt strategies such as repetition, grammar tables, or word associations to enhance their English proficiency. Further findings suggest that while learners can reflect on their learning, they may need more guidance in translating this reflection into actionable improvement plans.

Overall, these findings reveal a developing but promising level of reflective learning ability among learners. Their capacity to think critically about their learning process, use various materials, and implement strategies contributes significantly to their independent and lifelong learning potential. Strengthening reflective practices through portfolio work, self-evaluation exercises, and guided reflection could further enhance these skills and deepen learner autonomy.

5.9. Analysis in Light of Research Objectives

The analysis and interpretation of the study results in respect to the two research questions developed for this investigation are presented in findings. The goal is to analyze the descriptive and variable-wise findings in order to clarify how they relate to the primary research goals concerning learner autonomy and its impact on English language proficiency among a public sector university in Sindh Pakistan.

What is the current state of learner autonomy in English language classrooms at a public sector university? Overall, the results show that learners have a moderately high degree of learner autonomy. The descriptive data demonstrate that the majority of students have high levels of motivation, favorable attitudes about learning English, and a distinct sense of accountability for their academic advancement. learners' increasing capacity to take control of their learning processes is shown in the continuously high for factors regarding independent learning, goal setting, and reflective learning strategies. Results show that a large number of students have acquired the basic characteristics of autonomous learners, including self-management, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. Additionally, high mean scores on questions on openness to new experiences and positive attitudes toward learning English show that students are willing to actively participate in the learning process and are open to creative teaching strategies. The investigation did, however, also point up areas in which learner autonomy is still lacking. Lower mean scores are observed for items measuring self-regulation, such as meeting deadlines, avoiding procrastination, and maintaining motivation without outside reinforcement. This suggests that even if learners are capable and willing to take initiative, they nevertheless struggle to maintain self-motivation and constant discipline. These results suggest that learner autonomy at a public sector university is in a transitional phase, where it is growing significantly but has not yet attained full maturity.

In conclusion, learner autonomy among a public sector university BS English students can be described as developing and fairly strong at the moment, with students exhibiting a definite potential to become fully autonomous learners. learners can make progress toward complete learner autonomy with the support of ongoing teacher supervision, organized instruction in self-regulated learning, and chances for independent practice.

The results of the investigation also reflect that learner autonomy significantly and favorably contributes to BS English students' increased English language proficiency. In addition to the statistics, learners who exhibit higher levels of autonomy also show better comprehension, greater engagement, and more successful English learning results. Language proficiency is directly enhanced by a number of features of autonomy, including self-initiative, the use of learning methodologies, and reflective thinking. First of all, self-initiative, along with participation in the learning process increase among autonomous learners. Continuous learning outside of the classroom is encouraged by their capacity to identify their learning requirements, set personal objectives, and actively seek information from a variety of sources.

Secondly, learners can practice English more successfully because of their ability to use a variety of resources and learning strategies, as demonstrated by high means in items pertaining to resource usage and strategy formulation. This flexibility enhances general communicative competence and promotes a deeper comprehension of linguistic structures. Long-term language skill retention and improved academic achievement are further benefits of being able to organize, monitor, and assess their learning outcomes.

Thirdly, social and cooperative learning improves language skills even more. Authentic communication chances are beneficial to students who actively participate in group discussions, peer relationships, and cooperative tasks. These exchanges strengthen social and linguistic development by fostering self-assurance, fluency, and contextual language use.

Overall, the results show that learner autonomy fosters motivation, independence, and reflective learning practices, all of which significantly improve English language ability. Giving students the freedom to take charge of their education makes them more self-assured, self-aware, and proactive—all qualities necessary for successful language learning. As a result, encouraging learner autonomy not only helps students succeed academically in English but also helps them acquire lifelong learning abilities that are crucial for their future personal and professional development.

5.10. Summary of Key findings

The analysis of findings shows that BS English learners at a public sector university have a promising degree of learner autonomy that enhances their English language proficiency. Even when learners exhibit high levels of drive, accountability, and

independence, other skills, including self-control and time management, still need improvement

The results give a thorough picture of learner autonomy as it exists today among BS English learners at a public sector university in Sindh Pakistan, and how it affects English language proficiency. Together, the findings reveal that learner autonomy is improving and that learners have a strong capacity for autonomous and self-regulated learning. Several significant trends are revealed by the study of all variables:

- ✓ Positive Attitude and Openness to Learning: Learners have a significant willingness to learning English as well as a positive attitude toward experimenting with new approaches to learning. Learners are driven by the importance of English proficiency, open to new ideas, and responsive to problems. This kind of openness provides an established behavioral basis for the growth of learner autonomy.
- ✓ Motivation and Willingness to Learn: Results indicate that learners are highly motivated to get better at English. The majority of learners are accountable for their own academic development. However, some learner's continue to rely on external reward, such as grades or teacher comments, suggesting that autonomy-supportive training could further increase intrinsic drive.
- ✓ Independent Learning Capability: learners' capacity to set objectives, organize their coursework, and work without continual supervision shows an amazing degree of independence. Their trust in managing their own learning is shown by the high average mean. This result emphasizes the learners' preparedness to switch from teacher-dependent to self-directed learning methods, which is a crucial sign of growing autonomy.
- ✓ Cooperative and Social Learning Skills: According to the findings, learners actively engage in peer learning activities and place a high value on teamwork. This measure, which has an average mean, indicates that learners feel comfortable working in groups, exchanging ideas, and encouraging one another. This combination of autonomy and teamwork points to a well-rounded approach to education, where social contact and autonomy coexist to improve language proficiency.
- ✓ Self-Regulation and Time Management: With an average mean dimension is found to be somewhat weaker than the others. While learners can arrange their study schedules, many find it difficult to stay consistent, prevent procrastination, and efficiently manage their time. Inconsistency in this area is further proven by the deletion of item 26 because of its poor reliability. These results highlight the necessity of focused tactics to support students in forming more resilient and self-disciplined habits.
- ✓ Reflective and Strategic Learning Skills: With an average mean learners have high reflective and strategic abilities. They are able to determine what they need to learn, select efficient learning techniques, and track their development. Self-evaluation and

the capacity to modify strategies in response to shortcomings, however, still need to be strengthened. Successful autonomous learners possess metacognitive awareness, which is shown by high scores in this domain.

Overall, the results demonstrate that learner autonomy is constantly increasing and relatively high among a public sector university in Sindh Pakistan. In the process of learning English, learners exhibit enthusiasm, responsibility, and strategic awareness. However, because self-control and inherent desire still require reinforcement, their autonomy is not yet fully developed. Additionally, the study demonstrates that learner autonomy has a favorable impact on English language competency, which enhances academic success, communicative competence, and confidence.

These findings imply that encouraging autonomy through suitable pedagogical interventions—like goal-setting workshops, learner training, and reflective learning strategies—may greatly improve English proficiency and independent learning abilities. Thus, the results have important implications for educators, curriculum designers, and legislators who want to develop independent, driven, and competent university-level English learners.

6. Conclusions

In this study, BS English learners at a public sector university located in Sindh Pakistan investigated the function of learner autonomy in English language acquisition. The study employed a quantitative method to evaluate autonomy levels and their influence on English competence, drawing on theoretical underpinnings from researchers such as Holec (1981), Benson (2011), and Nunan (1997). The Language Learner Autonomy Scale (LLAS), a 26-item instrument that assesses traits like motivation, self-regulation, cooperative skills, independent abilities, openness to learning, and reflective strategies, was used to gather data from 143 participants.

Several important choices can be made in light of the results. First, learners are actively developing learner autonomy due to their commitment and positive mentality. This gives support to Nunan's (1997) five-level framework, which describes autonomy as a gradual process rather than an all-or-nothing condition. While learners' shortcomings in self-regulation point to a need for focused help, their strengths in independent and reflective abilities demonstrate that they are prepared to assume greater responsibility. Second, it is evident that learner autonomy improves English language competency. Using techniques that enhance comprehension and production abilities, autonomous students interact more deeply with the language. This is consistent with earlier studies demonstrating that self-directed learners perform better in EFL/ESL contexts (Razmjoo, 2011; Karimi & Atai, 2014).

Fostering autonomy can help close the gap between classroom learning and practical application in Pakistan, where cultural norms maintain a strong emphasis on teacher authority. Third, the growth of autonomy is influenced by institutional and cultural variables. Although students appreciate their educators, this can sometimes restrict their independence, which is similar to problems encountered in non-Western environments (Palfreyman & Smith, 2003). Nonetheless, the study's findings imply that students may achieve a balance between respect and independence through facilitative instruction. All things considered; the study finds that encouraging student autonomy is crucial to successful English instruction at the public sector university of Sindh Pakistan. Learners become proactive learners as a result, increasing not only competence but also self-assurance and flexibility for upcoming problems.

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