



READINESS FOR LEARNER AUTONOMY AMONG PROSPECTIVE ENGLISH TEACHERS IN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN: LEVELS AND GENDER DIFFERENCES

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Abstract

Learner autonomy is widely regarded as an important goal of language education, yet learners differ in their readiness to assume responsibility for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning. This quantitative study examined readiness for learner autonomy among 86 university students enrolled in English programmes and preparing for or considering English-related teaching careers in Punjab, Pakistan, and investigated whether readiness differed by gender. A 34-item questionnaire adapted from Swatevacharkul's Learner Autonomy Readiness Instrument measured four domains: willingness to take responsibility, self-confidence to learn autonomously, motivation to learn English, and capacity to learn autonomously. The original data were analysed in SPSS 25, and the saved summary outputs were subsequently checked for arithmetic consistency. Overall readiness was high ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.89$). Motivation received the highest mean ($M = 3.84$), followed by capacity ($M = 3.61$) and willingness ($M = 3.61$), whereas self-confidence was moderate ($M = 3.39$). Female students obtained a slightly higher total score than male students, but the difference was not statistically significant, $t(84) = -0.28$, $p = .78$, 95% CI $[-15.05, 11.29]$. The effect size was negligible (Cohen's $d = -0.06$), indicating that gender explained little practical variation in readiness. The findings suggest that learners are motivated and willing to assume responsibility but still require structured support to strengthen confidence in making independent learning decisions. Teacher education programmes should therefore move gradually from teacher direction toward guided autonomy, with explicit training in goal setting, strategy selection, resource use, and self-evaluation.

Keywords: *Gender Differences, Learner Autonomy, Motivation, Prospective English Teachers, Readiness, Self-Confidence*

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1. Introduction

Learner autonomy has become a central concern in learner-centred language education. It is generally understood as learners' capacity to take charge of important decisions about their own learning, including objectives, content, methods, monitoring, and evaluation (Holec, 1981). This understanding does not remove the teacher from the learning process. Rather, it changes the relationship between teachers and learners by giving learners a more active role while teachers provide guidance, resources, feedback, and conditions in which independent learning can develop (Little, 1991; Benson, 2011).

The relevance of autonomy is especially clear in language learning. Progress in a second or foreign language requires sustained engagement beyond formal classroom hours. Learners need to seek input, practise skills, notice their weaknesses, select suitable strategies, and evaluate whether their efforts are effective. Nunan (1996) argued that a learner-centred classroom must attend not only to language content but also to the learning process. Similarly, Dickinson (1995) linked autonomy with motivation and responsibility, suggesting that learners who recognise their own role are more likely to maintain effort over time.

Autonomy is nevertheless complex and context-sensitive. Educational traditions, institutional expectations, assessment systems, teacher beliefs, learner confidence, and access to resources can all influence how much responsibility learners are willing and able to exercise (Benson, 2007; Littlewood, 1999). In many Asian settings, autonomy has sometimes been treated as a Western idea that conflicts with teacher authority. Littlewood (1999), however, cautioned against such broad cultural assumptions and argued that autonomy should be adapted to learners' needs rather than rejected on cultural grounds. Learners may value teacher expertise while also wanting greater participation in decisions and more opportunities to learn independently.

In Pakistan, English is closely connected with higher education, professional mobility, and access to wider academic and employment opportunities. University students preparing for English-related careers therefore need more than classroom knowledge: they need the ability to continue learning when formal instruction is limited. Future teachers are a particularly important group because their own experiences of autonomy may influence whether they later provide autonomy-supportive classrooms. Teachers who have little confidence in managing their own learning may find it difficult to encourage pupils to set goals, select strategies, or evaluate progress.

Readiness is a useful starting point because autonomy cannot simply be imposed. Before programmes attempt to foster independent learning, they need evidence about learners' willingness, motivation, confidence, and perceived capacity. Earlier studies in Malaysia, Turkey, Thailand, and Ukraine found that students often express positive attitudes toward responsibility and motivation, while their confidence or practical ability

to act autonomously is less consistent (Ming & Alias, 2007; Swatevacharkul, 2009; Yıldırım, 2008; Khalymon & Shevchenko, 2017).

More recent research continues to show that readiness is multidimensional rather than a single stable trait. Nguyen and Habók (2021) validated a broad learner-autonomy questionnaire that distinguished motivational, metacognitive, and contextual components. Studies in Vietnam and Pakistan have likewise reported generally positive attitudes toward autonomy while emphasising that learners still benefit from guidance, supportive environments, and purposeful use of learning resources (Tham & Vy, 2023; Haseeb et al., 2024). These findings strengthen the need to examine both overall readiness and the specific dimensions in which support is required.

The present study examined university students enrolled in English programmes in Punjab who were preparing for or considering English-language teaching and related careers. It addressed two questions: (1) What is their level of readiness for learner autonomy? and (2) Does readiness differ significantly between male and female learners? By combining domain-level results with selected item-level patterns, the study identifies not only whether learners appear ready, but also where the gap between willingness and confident action is most visible.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualising Learner Autonomy

Holec's (1981) influential definition presents autonomy as the ability to take charge of one's learning. This includes determining objectives, defining content and progression, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring learning, and evaluating what has been achieved. Autonomy is therefore an acquired capacity, not a fixed personality trait. It can develop through experience, reflection, and participation in learning decisions.

Little (1991) clarified several misconceptions. Autonomy is not synonymous with studying alone, learning without a teacher, or following one particular teaching method. An autonomous learner may work collaboratively and seek assistance when necessary. What matters is that learners increasingly understand and regulate their learning rather than merely comply with instructions. Little (1995) further connected learner autonomy with teacher autonomy, arguing that teachers need professional freedom and reflective awareness if they are to help learners become responsible participants.

Benson (2007, 2011) described autonomy as involving control over learning management, cognitive processes, and learning content. This broader view recognises that learners may demonstrate autonomy differently across contexts. Some may be capable of managing time and resources but have little freedom to influence curriculum content. Others may be strongly motivated but lack metacognitive knowledge about effective learning strategies. The concept is therefore better treated as multidimensional and developmental.

Littlewood (1999) distinguished proactive autonomy, in which learners determine directions and methods, from reactive autonomy, in which they organise resources to pursue goals established by others. This distinction is useful in teacher-centred systems because it allows autonomy to develop gradually. Learners may initially work autonomously within teacher-defined tasks and later gain greater responsibility for setting goals and evaluating outcomes.

2.2. Readiness: Willingness, Confidence, Motivation, and Capacity

The questionnaire used in this study organises readiness into four domains: willingness to take responsibility, self-confidence, motivation to learn English, and capacity to learn autonomously (Swatevacharkul, 2009). These domains are closely related but not interchangeable.

Willingness concerns whether learners accept responsibility and want to participate in decisions about their learning. Dam (1995) argued that the development of autonomy depends on both capacity and willingness to act. Learners may possess strategies but choose not to use them if they believe learning is solely the teacher's responsibility. Conversely, willingness without practical skills may produce positive attitudes but limited independent action.

Self-confidence refers to learners' belief that they can make appropriate decisions and continue learning without constant teacher direction. Confidence is important because autonomy involves uncertainty: learners must judge what to study, which resources to use, and whether they are progressing. Oxford (1990) and Wenden (1991) emphasised metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Learners who understand these processes are more likely to trust their own decisions.

Motivation supplies the energy needed to sustain autonomous behaviour. Dickinson (1995) suggested that autonomy and motivation reinforce one another. Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan (2002) likewise concluded that motivation and autonomy tend to develop reciprocally rather than through a simple one-way relationship. Self-determination theory similarly proposes that environments supporting meaningful choice and competence can strengthen intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Reeve and Jang (2006) showed that teachers can support autonomy by listening to learners, providing rationales, acknowledging difficulties, and allowing appropriate choice rather than relying on controlling language.

Capacity includes the knowledge and skills needed to formulate goals, select learning methods, locate resources, monitor progress, and assess outcomes. Capacity can be developed through learner training. Ellis and Sinclair (1989) argued that learners should be taught how to learn, while Dickinson (1993) noted that autonomous learners commonly extend their learning beyond the classroom through self-selected activities and resources.

2.3. The Teacher's Role in Fostering Autonomy

Autonomy does not make teachers unnecessary. The teacher's role changes from being the exclusive source of knowledge to becoming a facilitator, adviser, resource, and partner in reflection. Feryok (2013) explained that autonomy is socially mediated: learners develop independence through guided participation rather than in isolation. Teachers can model planning, help learners set realistic goals, provide feedback on strategy use, and create opportunities for self-assessment.

Teacher beliefs are especially influential. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) found that teachers generally valued learner autonomy but differed in what they considered feasible in their own classrooms. Institutional constraints, examinations, large classes, learner expectations, and limited time can restrict practice. For prospective teachers, developing personal autonomy is therefore part of professional preparation. They need to experience shared decision-making and reflection before they can confidently foster these processes among their future students.

Autonomy-supportive teaching also requires balance. Too little guidance may leave learners confused, while excessive control prevents them from practising decision-making. Reeve et al. (2004) found that greater autonomy support could increase engagement. In language education, this support may include negotiated goals, choices among tasks, guided use of online resources, learning journals, portfolios, peer collaboration, and regular reflection on progress.

Current work on pre-service EFL teachers similarly stresses that readiness to develop autonomy is shaped by the quality of teacher education and by opportunities to practise autonomy rather than merely discuss it (Cirocki et al., 2025). This supports a staged approach in which responsibility is transferred gradually and accompanied by explicit strategy instruction.

2.4. Empirical Studies and Gender

Research across contexts has produced a recurring pattern. Ming and Alias (2007) found that Malaysian undergraduates desired greater independence but continued to value teacher-centred support. Yıldırım (2008) reported that Turkish university learners were willing to share responsibility, engaged in some independent activities, and generally believed they could act autonomously. Swatevacharkul (2009) reported high willingness, motivation, and capacity among Thai tertiary learners but only moderate self-confidence. Khalymon and Shevchenko (2017), using the same four-domain framework with prospective teachers in Ukraine, found moderate overall readiness, with motivation and willingness among the stronger areas.

Studies of teacher trainees also suggest that autonomy is relevant to future professional learning. Sarkawi et al. (2019) found high autonomy among Malaysian ESL teacher trainees, while the relationship between self-rated English ability and autonomy

was positive but weak. Such findings imply that learners may be motivated and responsible without feeling fully confident about their language proficiency or learning decisions.

Gender findings are mixed. Badak and Şenel (2022) reported higher learner-autonomy attitudes among female prospective English teachers, whereas Cirocki et al. (2025) found no significant gender difference in pre-service teachers' readiness to foster learner autonomy. These contrasting results suggest that gender should be treated as a context-dependent empirical question rather than a universal explanation of autonomous behaviour.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Questions

The study used a quantitative, descriptive-comparative survey design. It measured the level of readiness for learner autonomy and compared total readiness scores across male and female participants. The research questions were:

1. What is the level of readiness for learner autonomy among university learners preparing for English-related teaching careers?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference between male and female learners in their readiness for learner autonomy?

3.2. Participants and Context

Participants were university-level students enrolled in English programmes at a private university and a public college in Sialkot District, Punjab, Pakistan. They had completed at least two years of university study and were preparing for or considering English-language teaching and related careers. In this study, the term prospective English teachers is used in this broad, career-oriented sense rather than to indicate enrolment in a formal teacher-education programme. The final sample comprised 86 learners: 36 males and 50 females.

Questionnaires were distributed electronically to 145 eligible students during May and June 2020, when face-to-face access was restricted. Participation was voluntary, the purpose of the study was explained, and confidentiality was assured. Eighty-six usable questionnaires were returned, giving a usable response rate of 59.3%. Because participation depended on voluntary response to an emailed questionnaire, the final sample is best understood as a volunteer sample drawn from the two institutions rather than as a fully probability-based sample.

3.3. Instrument

Data were collected using a 34-item questionnaire adapted from Swatevacharkul's (2009) Learner Autonomy Readiness Instrument. The instrument contained four domains: willingness to take learning responsibility (Items 1–7), self-confidence to learn autonomously (Items 8–13), motivation to learn English (Items 14–23), and capacity to learn autonomously (Items 24–34). The source study reported coefficients of .80 and .84

for validity and reliability, respectively. Because the raw responses were unavailable, reliability could not be recalculated for the present sample.

Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Mean scores were interpreted as very low (1.00–1.50), low (1.51–2.50), moderate (2.51–3.50), high (3.51–4.50), and very high (4.51–5.00). The domain labels were not shown to respondents.

Because the raw response file was no longer available during manuscript preparation, the saved SPSS summaries and response-frequency tables were checked for internal consistency. The response scale was standardised as 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Item-level entries that could not be verified were omitted from detailed interpretation. Domain statistics and gender-group summaries were retained only where they were arithmetically coherent. The overall total score was reconstructed from the reported male and female group statistics ($M = 123.67$, $SD = 30.14$) and divided by 34 to express it on the original five-point scale ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.89$).

4. Data Analysis

The original dataset was analysed in SPSS version 25. For the present manuscript, the saved summary output was rechecked arithmetically. Means and standard deviations are reported for the four readiness domains, and selected item-level statistics are presented only where the saved records were internally consistent. The overall scale mean and standard deviation were reconstructed from the reported gender-group totals. An independent-samples t-test compared male and female total readiness scores, with statistical significance set at $p < .05$.

The reported group sizes, means, and standard deviations were also used to verify the t statistic and to calculate Cohen's d and a 95% confidence interval for the mean difference. These calculations confirmed the direction, magnitude, and non-significance of the reported gender comparison.

5. Results

5.1. Overall Readiness for Learner Autonomy

Table 1 presents the four domain scores. Overall readiness was high ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.89$), equivalent to an overall total score of $M = 123.67$ ($SD = 30.14$) across the 34 items. Motivation to learn English produced the highest mean ($M = 3.8372$, $SD = 1.2629$). Capacity to learn autonomously ($M = 3.6121$, $SD = 0.8864$) and willingness to take responsibility ($M = 3.6063$, $SD = 0.9878$) were also high. Self-confidence was the only domain in the moderate range ($M = 3.3876$, $SD = 0.7210$).

Table 1. Readiness for learner autonomy by domain

Domain	M	SD	Interpretation
Willingness to take learning responsibility	3.6063	0.9878	High
Self-confidence to learn autonomously	3.3876	0.7210	Moderate

Motivation to learn English	3.8372	1.2629	High
Capacity to learn autonomously	3.6121	0.8864	High
Overall readiness	3.64	0.89	High

Note. The overall mean and standard deviation were reconstructed from the reported gender-group total-score summaries; domain statistics were retained from the saved SPSS output.

5.2. Willingness to Take Responsibility

Learners generally accepted responsibility for their learning. The strongest item concerned readiness to assess whether their learning was effective ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.214$). Seeking information outside class when the teacher did not provide instructions also received a high mean ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.316$), as did taking charge of one's own learning ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.346$). Participation in deciding lesson content ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.261$) and deciding what to learn outside class ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.205$) were positive but comparatively lower. The domain results therefore indicate willingness to accept responsibility, although learners were somewhat less decisive when responsibility involved choosing content or direction.

5.3. Self-Confidence to Learn Autonomously

Self-confidence was the weakest domain. The lowest item in the questionnaire was the belief that constant teacher support was unnecessary ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.355$). Confidence in deciding how to learn inside and outside class was also moderate ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.152$). By contrast, learners reported stronger confidence in making an effort to seek knowledge according to their needs ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.170$), treating learning as a priority ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.189$), and managing time productively ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.124$). These results suggest that learners trusted their effort and commitment more than their ability to operate without teacher guidance.

5.4. Motivation to Learn English

Motivation was the strongest domain. Learners associated English with higher education ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.356$), communication with a wider range of people ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.313$), future opportunities ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.251$), and teacher encouragement to learn inside and outside class ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.260$). Studying English for good grades was comparatively lower but remained high ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.367$). The pattern shows that motivation was both instrumental and communicative: students valued English for education and employment, but also for participation and interaction.

5.5. Capacity to Learn Autonomously

Learners also perceived themselves as capable of many autonomous behaviours. Awareness of weak learning points and willingness to strengthen them both received means of 3.74 ($SD = 1.087$ and 1.285 , respectively). Confidence in taking charge of learning was high ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.241$). Selecting resources outside class received the

lowest mean in this domain ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.144$), placing it at the upper end of the moderate range. The results suggest that learners recognised their weaknesses and wanted to improve them, but some remained uncertain about choosing appropriate materials independently.

Table 2. Selected item-level results

Domain	Item (abridged)	M	SD
Willingness	Assess whether my learning is effective	3.72	1.214
Willingness	Seek information outside class when not directed	3.66	1.316
Willingness	Take charge of my own learning	3.63	1.346
Self-confidence	Constant teacher support is not required	2.63	1.355
Self-confidence	Decide how to learn in and out of class	3.22	1.152
Self-confidence	Seek knowledge according to my needs	3.74	1.170
Motivation	English supports higher education	3.97	1.356
Motivation	English increases confidence to communicate	3.92	1.313
Motivation	English is important for my future	3.85	1.251
Capacity	Recognise weak learning points	3.74	1.087
Capacity	Strengthen weak learning areas	3.74	1.285
Capacity	Take charge of my own learning	3.67	1.241
Capacity	Select learning resources outside class	3.45	1.144

Note. Items are abridged for readability; response scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

5.6. Gender Differences

Female learners obtained a slightly higher total readiness score ($M = 124.46$, $SD = 28.19$) than male learners ($M = 122.58$, $SD = 33.03$). Using male minus female scores, the difference was not statistically significant, $t(84) = -0.28$, $p = .78$. Thus, the available evidence did not indicate a gender difference in readiness.

The mean difference was -1.88 points (male minus female), with a 95% confidence interval from -15.05 to 11.29. Cohen's d was -0.06, indicating a negligible effect. The interval includes both a possible male advantage and a possible female advantage, reinforcing the conclusion that the available data do not support a meaningful gender difference.

Table 3. Readiness scores by gender

Gender	n	M	SD
Male	36	122.58	33.03
Female	50	124.46	28.19

Independent-samples test: $t(84) = -0.28$, $p = .78$, 95% CI [-15.05, 11.29]; Cohen's $d = -0.06$.

6. Discussion

The study found a high overall level of readiness for learner autonomy among prospective English teachers ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.89$). Learners were motivated, willing to

accept responsibility, and generally confident that they could identify weaknesses, search for knowledge, and manage aspects of their learning. These findings support earlier studies in which tertiary learners viewed autonomy positively and reported willingness to share responsibility with teachers (Ming & Alias, 2007; Yıldırım, 2008). They also resemble Swatevacharkul's (2009) finding that willingness, motivation, and capacity may be stronger than self-confidence.

The most important pattern is the contrast between high motivation and moderate self-confidence. Learners valued English because of its relevance to higher education, communication, employment, and social participation. They also reported readiness to evaluate their progress and improve weaknesses. However, many were uncertain that they could learn without constant teacher support or decide independently how to learn. This gap indicates that positive attitudes should not be mistaken for complete practical readiness.

The distinction between willingness and confident action is pedagogically significant. A learner may agree that students should take responsibility while still expecting the teacher to choose materials, explain procedures, and confirm whether decisions are correct. In such cases, abruptly withdrawing teacher support would not foster autonomy; it could create uncertainty or disengagement. The findings instead support a gradual transfer of responsibility. Teachers can initially offer limited choices, model goal setting, discuss the strengths of different resources, and provide criteria for self-evaluation. As learners gain experience, choices can become broader and teacher intervention less frequent.

The moderate confidence score is also consistent with the idea that autonomy is learned. Wenden (1991) and Oxford (1990) emphasised metacognitive knowledge and strategies, while Ellis and Sinclair (1989) proposed explicit learner training. The participants appeared committed to effort and time management, but they needed greater confidence in planning and resource selection. Teacher education programmes should therefore include practical tasks in which students design personal learning plans, select materials for specific goals, maintain learning records, and justify changes in strategy.

Motivation offers a strong foundation for this training. Because learners already connect English with meaningful future outcomes, autonomy-supportive activities can be linked to their professional identities. For example, prospective teachers can create individual language-development goals, collect authentic teaching materials, evaluate online resources, and reflect on how their own learning decisions may influence future classroom practice. This connects personal autonomy with professional competence.

The results also reinforce the teacher's continuing role. Participants rated teacher inspiration highly and showed reluctance to operate without support. This does not necessarily indicate resistance to autonomy. It may reflect an expectation that good

teachers provide structure while learners take increasing responsibility within that structure. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) similarly showed that teachers may value autonomy while recognising contextual limits. Guided autonomy is therefore more appropriate than a simple opposition between teacher-centred and learner-centred teaching.

No significant gender difference was found. Male and female learners had very similar total scores, and the negligible effect size suggests that gender was not a practically useful explanation of readiness in this sample. This result aligns with Cirocki et al. (2025), who found no gender difference in pre-service teachers' readiness to foster autonomy, but contrasts with Badak and Şenel (2022), who reported higher autonomy attitudes among female prospective teachers. Together, these findings indicate that gender patterns vary by context, construct, and measurement.

The findings remain relevant in contemporary technology-rich learning environments. Digital resources can expand opportunities for independent learning, but access alone does not ensure effective autonomy. Recent studies show that learners benefit when online tools are accompanied by strategy instruction, clear goals, reflection, and supportive interaction (Nguyen & Habók, 2021; Oubadi & Lamkhanter, 2024). For these participants, digital learning would be most useful when it strengthens the weaker areas identified here—confidence in choosing resources, deciding how to learn, and monitoring progress.

7. Pedagogical Implications

The findings suggest several implications for teacher educators and university English programmes. First, autonomy should be introduced as guided practice rather than as an expectation that students immediately work alone. Teachers can gradually transfer responsibility through negotiated goals, task choices, learning contracts, and short reflective activities.

Second, programmes should focus specifically on self-confidence. Learners need repeated opportunities to make manageable decisions and receive feedback on the quality of those decisions. Confidence can be strengthened by asking students to compare resources, explain strategy choices, and evaluate evidence of progress rather than merely report whether they studied.

Third, motivation should be connected with concrete learning plans. Students' strong interest in higher education, employment, and communication can be translated into specific objectives, such as improving academic reading, classroom English, pronunciation, or professional writing. Clear links between goals and strategies may help learners convert motivation into sustained autonomous behaviour.

Fourth, prospective teachers should examine autonomy from both learner and teacher perspectives. They can reflect on their dependence on teachers, experience autonomy-supportive tasks, and then design similar activities for future pupils. This may

help prevent a cycle in which teachers reproduce the highly directive practices they experienced as learners.

Finally, institutional support is necessary. Learner autonomy is difficult to sustain when assessment rewards only memorisation or when students lack access to appropriate resources. Programmes should align assessment, advising, digital-resource training, and classroom practice so that independent learning is recognised and supported rather than treated as an optional extra.

8. Limitations

The study has several limitations. The sample was limited to 86 students from two institutions in Sialkot District, so the findings should not be generalised to all university learners in Punjab or Pakistan. The study relied on self-reported perceptions rather than observations of autonomous behaviour. Learners may express positive beliefs without consistently acting on them. Data were collected during the disruption of 2020, which may also have influenced learners' experiences of independent and technology-mediated learning.

The raw response file was unavailable at the time of manuscript preparation, so current-sample reliability and a complete item-level reanalysis could not be performed. To reduce reporting risk, only internally coherent saved statistics were retained; the overall score and gender comparison were reconstructed from the available group summaries; and item-level entries that could not be verified were omitted. The results should therefore be interpreted as a reconstruction of saved statistical output rather than a fresh analysis of individual-level responses.

The study examined gender as a binary grouping and did not investigate other potentially important variables such as institution, year of study, prior language proficiency, socioeconomic background, access to technology, or previous experience with self-directed learning.

9. Directions for Future Research

1. Larger multi-institutional studies across Punjab should retain complete datasets and test the instrument's reliability and factor structure in this context.

2. Mixed-methods and longitudinal studies should examine whether reported readiness predicts prospective teachers' actual self-regulation and later autonomy-supportive classroom practice.

10. Conclusion

The prospective English teachers in this study demonstrated high overall readiness for learner autonomy. Motivation, willingness to take responsibility, and perceived capacity were strong, while self-confidence was moderate. Learners appeared ready to participate actively in their learning but remained uncertain about making decisions

without continuing teacher support. No statistically or practically meaningful gender difference was found.

The central implication is that autonomy should be developed through structured support. Teacher educators can build on learners' motivation while explicitly teaching goal setting, resource selection, strategy use, monitoring, and self-evaluation. The aim is not to remove teachers but to help learners become increasingly capable of making informed decisions. For prospective teachers, this development has a double value: it strengthens their own continuing language learning and prepares them to create classrooms in which future learners can gradually assume responsibility.

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