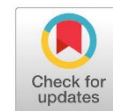


Research Article

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Autonomous learning among private and public learners

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Abstract: In this article we first provide a theoretical background to our study by explaining the most important concepts of our research; this is followed by a description of the data collection procedures. Next, we present our hypothetical model of motivational factors, self-regulatory strategies, and autonomous learning behavior and show how the data provide support for our conceptualization of the interaction of these constructs. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the findings of our study. Autonomous learning will be dealt with in this paper by discussing some crucial elements that ought to exist in this process, for learners to develop an inner instinct to learn autonomously. Another important perspective in this paper is comparing a private learning setting to a public learning setting, in order to figure out the elements that aid learners in each setting to improve their responsibility towards their learning autonomously. Learners are usually not used to the concept of learning autonomously, in that respect they need a certain setting with appropriate tools and aids, with an open mentality on both sides; the teacher and learner to adapt this learning process.

Keywords: Autonomous, learning, motivation, private, public, strategies.

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التعلم المستقل بين المتعلمين من القطاعين الخاص والعام

المستخلص: نقدم في هذا المقال أولاً خلفية نظرية لدراستنا من خلال شرح أهم مفاهيم بحثنا؛ يلي ذلك وصف لإجراءات جمع البيانات. بعد ذلك، نقدم نموذجنا الافتراضي للعوامل التحفيزية، واستراتيجيات التنظيم الذاتي، وسلوك التعلم المستقل ونبين كيف توفر البيانات الدعم لتصورنا للتفاعل بين هذه البنات. وأخيراً، نناقش الآثار النظرية والتربوية لنتائج دراستنا. سيتم التعامل مع التعلم المستقل في هذه الورقة من خلال مناقشة بعض العناصر الحاسمة التي يجب أن تكون موجودة في هذه العملية، حتى يتمكن المتعلمون من تطوير غريزة داخلية للتعلم بشكل مستقل. هناك منظور مهم آخر في هذه الورقة وهو مقارنة بيئة التعلم الخاص ببيئة التعلم العام، من أجل معرفة العناصر التي تساعد المتعلمين في كل بيئة على تحسين مسؤوليتهم تجاه تعلمهم بشكل مستقل. عادة لا يكون المتعلمون معتادين على مفهوم التعلم المستقل، وفي هذا الصدد فهم بحاجة إلى بيئة معينة مع الأدوات والوسائل المساعدة المناسبة، مع عقلية منفتحة على كلا الجانبين؛ المعلم والمتعلم لتكييف عملية التعلم هذه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مستقل، تعلم، تحفيز، خاص، عام، الاستراتيجيات.



Introduction

Autonomy is a wide concept and is in fact not a single, in the real world means different things to different people from various perspectives. What is autonomy?

Autonomy is a blurry concept as it carries a variety of levels, as known it is the freedom of learning under the supervision of the teacher, depending on the teacher's flexibility to allow students to take a part of the responsibility, or none. (Candlin and Hall in 2011). Also as stated by ILDIKÓ HORVÁTH (2007) *Autonomous learning is a complex and multi-faceted construct. It can be defined as the learners' capacity to self-direct their own learning, which means taking responsibility for the decisions concerning the different aspects of the learning process.*

Also Amit Gautam (2021) pointed out that autonomy should be approached from a similar perspective that a child first acquired his first skills and personality aspects in an informal free environment with no pressure, obstacles or dead line, total encouragement and support. This is how autonomous learning develops and flourishes in a way learners benefit the most.

Amit Gautam also discusses some tips to encourage autonomy and make it accessible to learners as making the knowledge available and easy to access it anywhere and at any time an element that helps learners to carry on learning nearly whenever they want. Also enabling learners to actually generate new tasks after consuming the teacher's tasks is a good sign that they have eventually are able to take responsibility of their learning.

Thanasoulas (2000) declared that autonomy is enabling the learner to plan, evaluate, organize and generate his own learning process and tasks to learn and take the responsibility of acquiring a language or learning a new piece of knowledge nearly on his own.

Benson (1997) argued that learning autonomously include three possible perspectives psychologically, technically, politically in the sense that affirm the skills and methods to adjust to unsupervised learning.

Holec (1981) describes autonomy as the learner to actually to take charge of his own learning process.

1. The Importance of Autonomy

Encouraging learners to practice their responsibilities and to act freely in class actually provokes their autonomous learning, on real grounds providing them with the opportunity to discover their abilities in learning (Amit Gautam, 2021).

Autonomy in learning includes many degrees and factors for learners to contain and work on to the extent that suits them the best, putting in to consideration individual differences; personality, attitude, and acceptance toward the new atmosphere. Pemberton, (1996) research about the importance of autonomy in class was of some conflict between teachers and learners as they could not agree on the crucial elements of autonomy and its importance except for conversation practice.

Slimani (1992) experimented the importance of interaction in class and do learners benefit from it. The sample of the experiment was on a group of Algerian students learning English eventually after interviewing students and teachers when time available learners get more input through classroom

interaction which has to be supported also to interaction outside classroom related to the knowledge of both.

Autonomous learning as expressed in other words as self-regulated learning (SRL) is found among children and young learners if worked on in early ages, allows learners to be more motivated in learning and their future life. Moreover, autonomy is with great effect and importance on the learners learning educationally, socially, and politically. (Oates, 2019).

2.The Crucial Elements in Autonomy learning

In educational processes such as autonomy critical elements should be included to be demonstrated properly at a certain level. Some of the elements will be discussed in this section to have at least a basic understanding of how autonomy could be carried out within decent conditions.

2.1. Technology

There is no clear or direct connection between technology and autonomy. So it is not a must, but it does facilitate and lowers barriers for learners in their educational journey, for instance the internet, and recordings do provide learners with authentic material and clarification on a certain topic. To be fair to say it serves as a tool for educational aims as autonomy which is considerably a tool also in the educational system (Esfandiari & Gawhary, 2019)

(Benson & Chik, 2010) also state that autonomy is more possible with the potentials of the new technology wide spread providing at whatever time and place the capability of discussing, arranging, and organizing knowledge online.

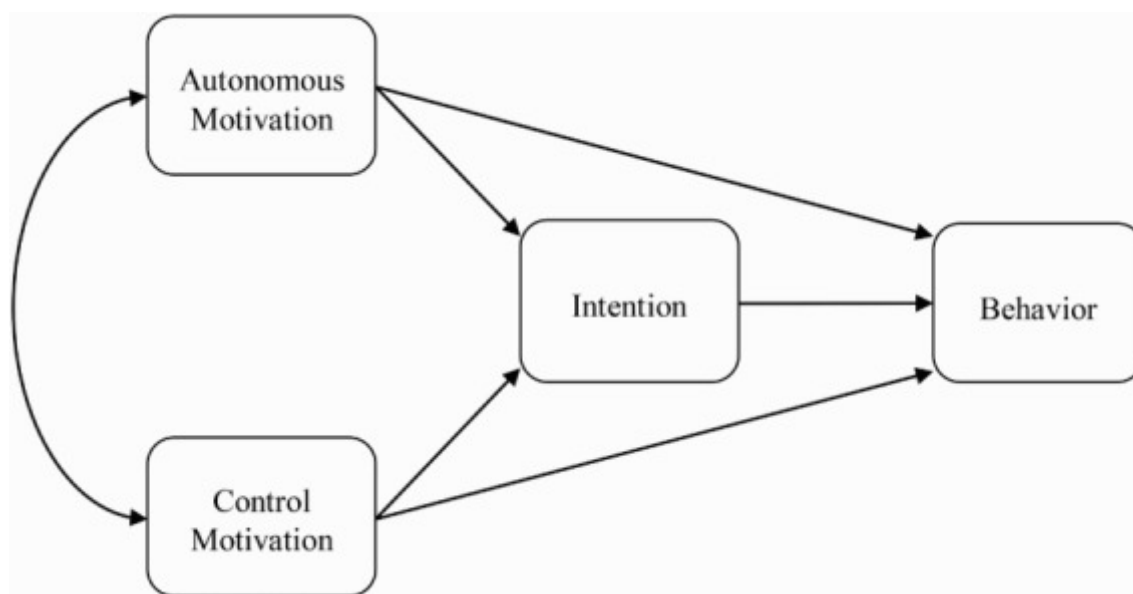
2.2. Motivation

Autonomous motivation is defined as engaging in a behavior because it is perceived to be consistent with intrinsic goals or outcomes and emanates from the self. In other words, the behavior is self-determined.

An important if not the most important element of any educational process or activity in life is motivation, serving as a motor to keep on going the hard work, turning it to be enjoyable and fun. Autonomy needs this requirement for learners to be able work and learn by themselves in and out of the classroom setting.

Bandura ([1986](#), [1997](#)), exhibits in his theory that motivation serves as a stronger and more effective component than actual skills, as can be seen in this respect a key element of motivation as personal agency belief; which is the persons own belief of what he is capable of accomplishing; giving a push to actually going through a task or activity. Persistence and effort are concepts included in motivation learning behavior in models of motivation. With the absence of these concepts motivation is incomplete.

Surprisingly to the researcher's knowledge, after thoroughly searching the concept of motivation, found out that it has two types and autonomy is considered one of them the second type is controlled motivation both of them provoke the individual's behavior after intentionally processing knowledge. (Taylor and francis,2014)



[Figure 1.](#)

Process model of effects of autonomous and controlled forms of motivation on behavior mediated by intentions.

2.3. The teacher's role (effect)

As well known in the educational atmosphere the most effective relationship in the process of learning is the teacher→ learner relationship. The teacher is in charge of the amount of control given to the learner, and effects the learner's ability to comprehend, process and produce. There is a difference between the teacher's performance in public and private education due to some factors.

The teacher's performance is effected by the learner's partial engagement in the learning process which brings teacher job satisfaction, depending on the power granted by the dean to the staff members. So, one thing leading to the other we can conclude that the more freedom provided to each responsible individual will improve the content of learning. ([Navaneethakrishnan](#), 2020). The teacher having control over the learning environment can be minimized or maximized, for instance the authority over designing the syllabus, conducting exams, and planning the course's time, which will allow the teacher enough space to provide learner's with their own space to practice being autonomous. (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Somech, 2016).

Shen etal. 2009 came to the conclusion that teacher's physical autonomy support of learner's autonomy leads to learning achievement. Teacher's attitude towards learners effect their performance. Motivating, supervising, with a safe distance allowing them to autonomously learn is the perfect combination for outstanding production.

MARGISON and SEARS, (2010) Demanding teachers to prepare autonomous learners that are able to decide, act and perform upon their knowledge, without giving them the exact tools to be able to perform in front of learners to set a role model, is absurd.

We teachers stand on the side of our students. We create a space where their voices can be heard, their experiences affirmed, their lives valued, their humanity asserted, enacted. Students cannot enter schools as “objects” – thingified doohickeys and widgets – and emerge as “subjects” – self-determined, conscious meaning makers, thoughtful, caring, self-activated, and free. (p. 102)

Time and suitable setting are other elements that aid the autonomous atmosphere, the lack of these and the previous elements act as a disadvantage for learners and make it difficult and not impossible to be autonomous.

3.Methodology

This research adopts a quantitative method approach, utilizing questionnaires as the primary tool for data collection. The use of questionnaires enables the systematic gathering of data from participants, allowing for the exploration of [specific phenomenon, behavior, or perception]. This method is particularly suited to studies that require structured data collection to ensure consistency and comparability.

In the case of quantitative research, the questionnaire includes closed-ended questions designed to measure specific variables and identify patterns. Statistical analysis is usually employed to interpret the responses, providing objective insights into the research problem.

The researcher has used questionnaires applied to two different universities. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to gain insights on the behavior, views, and experiences concerning the most effective elements that learners are more comfortable about, and tend to use while learning and somehow might lead to autonomy, and whether the role of the teacher is substantial in this process.

4.Participants

The sample was collected from a public university (Benghazi university) and a private university (Balagrae university), with total number of 36 students (male and female.) that were willingly ready to answer and discussed some points with the researcher to clarify some ideas about autonomy.

5.Discussion of the research

The research data collected was subjected to be analyzed in a qualitative manner. Both questionnaires were analyzed in the same manner resulting nearly with the close percentages.

5.1(Private) Balagrae University:

The questionnaire applied at the private university (Balagrae Un) showed that students were dependent, relied most of the time on their hard work especially outside the classroom, for most of the students they dealt with teachers as helpers and for conciliation, considering their teacher's knowledge as a last resort to check and council. Learners also used their spare time for extra practice and to maximize and improve their knowledge. Private schools had great benefit from facilities at school as libraries, internet, cassettes, and conversation classes.

Another element that private institutes have is time, in class they have the advantage of less numbers of students, providing them with the opportunity of turns to speak and discuss any topic.

Teachers on the other hand were more open to discussion and creativity in class, maybe due to the authority and decency that he was treated by the principle and students.

The total percentage was 50% of the students showed clear elements of autonomous learning, while there was 35% of them that needed the teacher more in the learning process and depended on him more than others. The rest of the group were not quite clear about their views and experience, still mixed feelings and perspectives of how to pursue their path of education.

5.2 (Public) Benghazi University:

The questionnaire applied to Benghazi University showed a variety of answers due to different backgrounds and individual differences, most learners were considered the teacher a crucial element in the learning process, in other words relied on the teacher taking the decisions, organizing the material, and guiding for readings and tasks.

Students were not consistent about their answers, contradicting themselves at times, the concept of autonomy was quite cloudy. Although there were attempts of doing some extra effort outside class as working on their listening, reading and some not many on their speaking; due to not having a partner to speak to at times to apply the practice.

Teacher's role was more in class than learners and they depend 80% of the time on him to say what is the situation how it is going to be led and even set a model for others to follow; copping the teacher to be on the safe side most of the time. Teachers also do not have enough time to provide for each student's need and practice in class due to the number of students and less quality time.

The educational atmosphere also is not of any help, as comfortable seats, air conditioners, blinds or curtains, appropriate lighting, or electricity at times in most of the sockets of the class, sometime no projectors all of these elements effects the learner's motivation. The questionnaire resulted of only 35% of the learners that showed some signs of autonomy.

6. Conclusion

The researcher's intention for this study was to have an apparent vision of the concept of autonomy, the importance, the elements, also a comparison of private and public university and if they apply this concept was conducted.

The results demand some work in both universities, but the public university should provide some more effort in facilities and motivate students to work more on themselves and provide extra chores to be accomplished, also to work on their self-esteem to be able to search, present, and carry out a certain topic solely with the least help from the teacher.

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Appendix 1

A questionnaire to investigate autonomous learning

Questionnaire for Learner Autonomy

The questionnaire is designed to survey learners' degree of autonomy and attitudes toward learner autonomy and autonomous learning practice both in and outside classroom among undergraduate and postgraduate students .

Tick the most suitable answer in your point of view:

Question 1

Level

- ☐ 1st Year Student
- ☐ 2nd Year Student
- ☐ 3rd Year Student
- ☐ MA student
- ☐ PhD student
- ☐ Teacher

Question 2

I can't learn without teacher supervision

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Somewhat not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 3

Whether you can learn English well or not depends on the teacher

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Somewhat not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 4

When I have a language problem ', I turn to teachers or classmates for help

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Somewhat not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 5

When what I read is difficult ', I either give it up or only study the easy parts

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Somewhat not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 6

If I had the right materials, I'd prefer to spend some time studying alone

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Somewhat not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 7

There isn't enough time in the classroom to assimilate all the information

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Somewhat not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 8

In language learning I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Somewhat not true of me

- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 9

I prefer to read books, magazines, newspapers all by myself without the teacher telling me what to read

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Somewhat not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 10

The teacher should only be a counselor', a helper and a guide

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Somewhat not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 11

I like learning the language on my own because I know best how to learn

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Somewhat not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 12

I spend at least half an hour listening to some useful English material to improve my listening comprehension everyday

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Somewhat not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me

- ☐ Always true of me

Question 13

I read certain amount of English material every day

- ☐ Never true of me
☐ Usually not true of me
☐ Somewhat not true of me
☐ Usually true of me
☐ Always true of me

Question 14

I keep up writing something every day such as English e-mails and diaries

- ☐ Never true of me
☐ Usually not true of me
☐ Somewhat not true of me
☐ Usually true of me
☐ Always true of me

Question 15

I preview my lessons before I have English classes

- ☐ Never true of me
☐ Usually not true of me
☐ Sometimes not true of me
☐ Usually true of me
☐ Always true of me

Question 16

I review regularly in English learning and check what I have learned

- ☐ Never true of me
☐ Usually not true of me
☐ Sometimes not true of me
☐ Usually true of me
☐ Always true of me

Question 17

I often discuss learning problems with classmates both inside and outside class

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Sometimes not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 18

I sometimes do assignments which are not compulsory, for example ' : writing compositions; doing test paper questions

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Sometimes not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 19

When I have a language problem ' , I first try to solve it myself and only if I don't manage to do it ' , do I turn to teachers or classmates for help

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Sometimes not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 20

I make a study plan and stick to it in order to achieve my aim

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Sometimes not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 21

I reasonably organize my spare time and spend at least two hours studying English every day

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Sometimes not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 22

I take every opportunity to speak English inside and outside class

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Sometimes not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 23

I make good use of the learning aids available in the library

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Sometimes not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 24

I can use all possible learning resources in language learning' such as reference books, cassettes, CDROM' and use the Internet for resources

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Sometimes not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 25

I take opportunities to study and use English inside and outside class

- ☐ Never true of me
- ☐ Usually not true of me
- ☐ Sometimes not true of me
- ☐ Usually true of me
- ☐ Always true of me

Question 26

I study English here due to

- ☐ A. my parents' demand
- ☐ B. curiosity
- ☐ C. getting a good job, help to my major
- ☐ D. interest of English culture, such as film, sports, music, etc.
- ☐ C and D

Question 27

I think my success or failure in English study is mainly due to

- ☐ luck or fate
- ☐ English studying environment
- ☐ studying facilities (aids)
- ☐ teachers
- ☐ myself

Question 28

When I am asked to use technologies that I haven't used before (e. g. internet discussion)

- ☐ I usually try to learn new skills
- ☐ I learn them following others
- ☐ I feel worried, but anyway
- ☐ I put it off or try to avoid it
- ☐ I resist using them

Question 29

I think the following way is most useful in my English study:

- ☐ taking notes

- mechanic memory
- doing exercises of grammar, translation, words etc.
- classifying or grouping or comparing
- group discussion