NÂNG CAO TÍNH TỰ CHỦ CỦA NGƯỜI HỌC: VAI TRÒ QUAN TRỌNG CỦA GIÁO VIÊN

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Tính tự chủ của người học được coi là một mục tiêu quan trọng cần đạt được trong đào tạo ngôn ngữ. Một trong số các yếu tố quan trọng ảnh hưởng đến việc hình thành tính tự chủ của người học là quan niệm của giáo viên về năng lực này cũng như khả năng hỗ trợ cho năng lực đó phát triển. Bài viết này làm rõ sự ảnh hưởng đó thông qua việc tổng hợp phân tích một số nghiên cứu liên quan đến vai trò của giáo viên trong việc phát triển năng lực tự chủ trong học tập của người học. Bài viết cũng bàn luận một vài yếu tố khác ảnh hưởng đến quá trình phát triển của tính tự chủ trong học tập, sau đó điểm lại một số khuyến nghị của các nhà nghiên cứu trong lĩnh vực giảng dạy tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ hoặc ngôn ngữ thứ hai (EFL/ESL). Bài viết nhằm gợi mở một số ý tưởng, từ cả góc độ lý thuyết lẫn thực hành, giúp giáo viên có thể lồng ghép việc phát triển năng lực tự chủ của người học vào quá trình dạy học của mình.

Từ khóa: tính tự chủ của người học, dạy và học ngôn ngữ, vai trò của giáo viên, thúc đẩy, hỗ trơ.

Learner autonomy is seen as an important goal in language education. One of major impacts on learner autonomy is the teacher's perception about autonomy as well as their ability to foster it. This paper attempts to clarify this impact by critically reviewing a range of studies related to the teacher's role in promoting learner autonomy. Some factors that influence the development of learner autonomy are discussed, followed by a number of suggestions recommended by researchers in different EFL/ESL contexts. The review introduces some theoretical and empirical ideas for language teachers to incorporate learner autonomy promotion into their teaching.

Keywords: learner autonomy, language teaching and learning, teacher's roles, promote, support.

PROMOTING LEARNER AUTONOMY: IMPORTANT ROLES OF THE TEACHER

I. INTRODUCTION

Learner autonomy has been a common topic in language research and education for the last four decades. The desire to learner autonomy is among the most popular research inquiries (Benson, 2001). One major impact on the autonomy of learners is their teachers' perception about autonomy as well as the ability to foster it. However, many studies have reported challenges for teachers in fostering learner

autonomy such as the lack of skills and

explore the roles of teachers in promoting

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techniques to do so, mostly because they are not sufficiently trained to support autonomous learning (Reinders & Balçikanli, 2011). It is indicated that in order to become autonomous, learners need a significant amount of preparation and ongoing support which some teachers cannot provide adequately because they are not trained for it (Benson, 1997; Oxford, 2003; Stefanou et al., 2004). Therefore, it is important to identify what skills and techniques should be included in both pre-service and in-service training courses that prepare teachers for fostering autonomy in their teaching. This paper attempts to answer the question by critically reviewing a range of studies related to the teacher's role in promoting learner autonomy and giving recommendations for EFL teachers on this topic.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition of learner autonomy

Learner autonomy was defined as an "ability to take charge of one's own learning" (Holec, 1981, p. 3). This definition remains the most commonly cited definition in the field of education (Benson, 2007). To clarify the concept of learner autonomy, other authors (Benson, 2007; Dam, 1995; Little, 1991; Littlewood, 1996; Macaro, 1997; Wenden, 1991) later emphasise the control of learning through willingness and capacity to take charge, as well critical reflection and independence in decision making.

is a multi-Learner autonomy dimensional concept. In studying learner autonomy, different conceptual theories were introduced to demonstrate its multidimensional features in teaching and such learning, perspectives as autonomy (Benson, 1997; Oxford, 2003), levels of control (Aoki & Smith, 1999; Scharle & Szabo, 2000), and domains of control (Littlewood; 1996; Macaro, 1997; Benson 2001). These studies shared a common view about learner autonomy: it is a capacity that learners need to develop during their learning process. In addition, learner autonomy involves different areas of control over the learning process, and it is a matter of degree with developmental stages (Nunan, 1997; Scharle & Szabo, 2000).

2. The importance of learner autonomy in language teaching and learning

Learner autonomy is seen as important and desirable goal in language education (Benson, 2001; Reinders, 2010). Benson (2001) argues that autonomous learning is more effective than nonautonomous learning. In other words, the development of autonomy implies better language learning. This view is further explained by Little (2006) who points out the relationship between learner autonomy learning effectiveness. and In his explanation, accepting responsibility for one's own learning has an affective characteristic. While taking charge, autonomous learners are motivated and committed proactive, selfmanagement, and self-reflective approach,

especially when they gain some success in learning. Learner motivation and self-reflection, in turn, will lead to more efficient and effective learning, which means that the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom can be flexibly applied to situations outside the classroom context. The importance of learner autonomy promotion is also reflected in other studies (Little, 2007; Nakata, 2014; Ushioda, 2011) in which the relationship between learner autonomy and learning effectiveness is highlighted.

The fact that learner autonomy levels had a significant and positive correlation with English proficiency was evidently proved in a number of empirical studies (Dafei, 2007; Hashemian & Soureshjani, 2011; Lowe, 2009; Myartawan & Latief, 2013; Ng et al., 2011; Reinders & Loewen, 2013; Sakai & Takagi, 2009). For instance, a study carried out by Reinders and Loewen (2013) in New Zealand showed that autonomous learning could have a remarkable impact learning achievement. Similarly, Sakai and Takagi (2009) found a positive correlation between learner autonomy and language proficiency when conducting a study in Japan. A positive link between learner autonomy and learning gains was also reported in different contexts, such as China (Dafei, 2007), Indonesia (Myartawan & Latief, 2013), (Hashemian & Soureshjani, 2011), United States (Lowe, 2009), and Malaysia (Ng et al., 2011).

Results from the above-mentioned theoretical and empirical studies suggest learner autonomy in language education has positive effects on both learning process and learning outcomes. It is, thus, necessary to promote learner autonomy because it helps learners reach their learning goals. In addition, learners who lack autonomy are capable of developing it if appropriate conditions and preparation are provided. Such conditions and preparation for the development of autonomy are discussed in the next section.

3. Factors influencing the development of learner autonomy

With the development of learnercentred approach, learners have been given opportunities to become active participants in the learning process including making decisions about the learning objectives and materials involved in the evaluation process. Therefore, they start to turn into independent and autonomous learners (Salimi & Ansari, 2015). A teacher who understands the effect of autonomous learning promote his/her learners to become an autonomous learner (Kemala, 2016). This section discusses five most prominent factors in literature that may influence the development of learner autonomy: learner awareness and skill of autonomous learning, learner affective factors, teacher's roles in supporting autonomy, teacher autonomy and teacher capacity to develop learner autonomy, and learning environment.

Learner awareness and skill of autonomous learning

Given the unstable concept of learner autonomy, learner awareness of autonomy varies. For example, Nguyen (2011) found that Vietnamese students were not fully aware of autonomous learning. students want to have their voices in deciding course aims, content. assessment, but do not actually know what to do. Humphreys and Wyatt (2014) also found that Vietnamese students expected their teachers to give them more ideas and instructions and to provide more resources to use. Similarly, Gamble et al. (2018) found that Asian learners seem to possess reactive autonomy. It means while they can organize their resources autonomously to achieve their learning goals, they are unable to take responsibility for their own learning. They seem to understand the importance of autonomous learning; yet they do not know how to fully take responsibility for their learning. In other words, they lack experience and skills in diagnosing their own learning needs, formulating their own goals, identify suitable resources, using effective strategies, and monitoring and evaluating their learning (Duong, 2014; Intraboonsom et al., 2020).

Learner affective factors

There are some psychological factors that may affect learner autonomy. Of all, individual self-motivation plays a key role in developing learner autonomy (Joshi, 2011; Darsih, 2018; Tran & Duong, 2018).

The study by Tran and Duong (2018) found that students had "plenty of freedom to do tasks which really motivated their learning" (p. However, they argued that providing learners freedom to choose the learning materials, to set their learning goals and study plan, self-assess their own writings, and reflect on their learning progress is not enough. Since the students lacked skills in these strategies, they felt confused when being given a great deal of freedom. Kemala (2016) also agreed that students with high motivation would have more positive experience in the class, hence directly attributed to the autonomy. Therefore, encouraging learner motivation and introducing them appropriate autonomous learning strategies should go hand in hand.

Other factors considered are hindering factors to effective autonomous learning, such as fear and insecurity (Gamble et al., 2018), passive and dependent learning behaviours (Nguyen, 2011; Intraboonsom et al., 2020), or laziness (Tran & Duong, 2018). For example, Gamble et al., (2018) found that Japanese EFL learners specifically have a psychological barrier in which they recognize what they need to do but feel they cannot act on it. In the study conducted by Nguyen (2011), students wished to have more voices in deciding the course aims, content, and assessment; however, they waited for their teachers to stimulate study motivation, and decide the learning contents. It is evident that learner depend on teachers, and their fear challenges teachers' practice in promoting autonomous learning. It also emphasises the roles of teachers in empowering their learners to move forward to more autonomous learners.

Teacher's roles in supporting autonomy

Many authors have emphasised the roles of teachers in the promotion of learner autonomy (e.g., Benson, 1997; Little, 1995; and Wenden, 1991). In this sense, the teacher is a facilitator, counsellor or guide with a supportive attitude towards the learner and within a learner-centred environment. It is essential for a teacher to release some power and pass it over to the students. The teacher can turn their students into independent learners by teaching them strategies to learn the language, rather than transmitting the language, and fostering self-reflection and critical thinking.

learner-centred environment, In teachers play an important role in fostering student experience and participation in learning (Darsih, 2018). Learner autonomy is seen as a potential capacity in individual learners, teachers are those who can awake it (Huang & Benson, 2013). Thus, teachers have an important role in this process: to classroom culture create a where autonomy is accepted (Balcikanli, 2010). addition. the teacher-student In relationship is crucial in promoting learner autonomy. The process of building trust

and cooperation between the teacher and student the students makes comfortable and secure in the classroom, and creates supportive and encouraging learning achievements, thus, help learners become more autonomous in learning (Kemala, 2016). Furthermore, according to Balcikanli (2010), teachers need to experience autonomous skills so that they will be able to take a positive stance towards the development of learner autonomy in their own teaching and their learners can take charge of their own learning following the models of their teachers. The nature of teachers' roles varies according to contexts and personalities (Joshi, 2011). However, the success of attempts to empower learners to become autonomous in their learning greatly depends on the teacher's ability to redefine roles (Kemala, 2016; Intraboonsom et al., 2020). Previous research identifies a number of appropriate roles for teachers in order to foster autonomy such as a helper, a supporter, a guide, a mentor, a resource, a facilitator, a motivator, and a positive feedback giver (Tran & Duong, 2018; Joshi, 2011).

Teacher autonomy and teacher capacity to develop learner autonomy

Regarding the notion of teacher autonomy, Nguyen and Walkinshaw (2018) explain it as individual autonomy, which is associated with teachers' internal capacity in being able to deal with pedagogical or institutional constraints in their teaching environment and their

ability to foster learner autonomy. Moreover, as another aspect of teacher autonomy, teacher-learner autonomy is crucial in teacher education. This involves "enabling teachers to exercise autonomy learners about their as profession, such as by involving them in the process of setting learning aims, designing course content, or assessing their own achievements" (Nguyen & Walkinshaw, 2018, p. 23). It is therefore important for teachers not only to learn about learner autonomy, but also build similar autonomy in their teaching practices, as Benson (2013) claimed that the development of learner autonomy depends on the development of teacher autonomy.

Previous research indicates that teacher capacity is important in improving learner autonomy (Humphreys & Wyatt, 2014). One prominent finding in the literature is that Asian teachers are capable of developing learner autonomy, but they are not sufficiently trained to do it (Tran & Duong, 2018; Reinders & Balcikanli, 2011). The capacity to support autonomous learning in the classroom is not enough because the power is not limited in classroom management. For example, Duong (2014) found that Vietnamese teachers theoretically value learner autonomy, but it is quite hard for them to implement it in practice. Reinders and Balcikanli (2011) suggest that teachers should also be able to control "other aspects such as curriculum planning, testing, and evaluation" (p.195).

Learning environment

Learning environment plays important role in fostering learner autonomy (Little, 2017). The environment is the place where a learner contributes himself/herself as an individual to the interactive process, and it can help learners to learn independently and effectively (Kemala, 2016). According to Al-Khawlani, (2018),a learning environment means social relations, physical environment concerning learning and teaching, and the conditions of learning. Benson (2001) argues that such environmental factors can influence the learning process. According to Kemala (2016), learner interaction with support from their teachers and peers can help develop autonomy. Benson (2001) asserts that autonomous learners are independent ones, who are responsible for their own conduct, but also are capable cooperating with others in the learning environment.

4. What teachers can do to promote learner autonomy

Enhancing learner awareness and skills of autonomous learning

Gamble et al. (2018) stated that there is a strong need for teachers to encourage student responsibility by helping them become aware of the importance of their roles in making decisions regarding their learning. Teachers should inspire their students to become autonomous learners. Depending on teachers' perspectives, students could take either some or all of

the responsibility for what they do. Therefore, teachers need to make their learners aware of learner autonomy and build up the skills for it.

Likewise, Camilleri (1999) argues that the most important role of learners in developing their autonomy includes awareness of self. According to Holec (1981), autonomous learners should be aware, good, and responsible ones. An 'aware learner' sees the relationship to what is to be learnt, how to learn, and the resources available in order to control their learning. In addition, a 'good learner' makes decisions related to choices of objective, content, materials, methods, learning techniques to be used, and how to progress and outcomes. 'responsible learner' is the one who accepts that his/her own efforts are essential for effective learning, and thus co-operates with teachers monitoring his/her own progress using available opportunities.

Nunan (1997) categorises five levels of learner autonomy in the domain of language learning: awareness, involvement, intervention, creation. transcendence. Along the five levels, teachers have a variety of tasks to do to support learners. For example, teachers should help learners aware of goals, strategies, and content materials. Teachers also need to get learners involved in making choices from a variety of goals, content, and strategies. In addition, they should encourage learners to adapt and modify the goals and learning content of

the program and scaffold learners in setting their goals, develop their content and create learning tasks. Furthermore, teachers should help learners connections between the content of classroom learning and the world. In turn, learners become more autonomous when they are expected to take charge of every level of their learning. By allowing learners more control over their learning, they will inevitably accept responsibility and gain more ownership over their own outcomes (Gamble et al., 2018).

Facilitating learner affective factors

Learner state of psychological readiness (being motivated and ready to take charge of their learning) is necessary in order to engage learners in autonomous learning (Humphreys & Wyatt, 2014.) Benson (2001) stated that autonomous learners need to exercise control over factors that influence their learning experience and the outcome of their learning. Previous research emphasizes the teacher role in helping learners overcome psychological barriers. For example, Tran (2020) believes that student affective attitude positive toward autonomous learning is considered a powerful motivating source for students.

Motivated learners see tasks as challenges while unmotivated ones or those with low confidence in their ability see them as obstacles and thus feel anxious about their learning. Therefore, as Gamble et al. (2018) suggested, teachers

should ease learner anxiety and build their confidence by incorporating studentcentred activities so that they become more independent and responsible learners. These tasks help learners engage in meaningful and purposeful contexts. Teachers can also create a friendly learning environment where learners are connected with each other and their teacher. Furthermore, teachers can apply motivational strategies, such as creating and implementing more intimate opportunities for learners to engage in tasks together in order to reduce student stress and anxiety. In developing their abilities and improving their confidence, teachers should consider educating them on the importance of learning strategies. Developing the ability to utilize learning strategies is necessary for students to take responsibility for their own learning. Also, empowering unmotivated students by training them to use learning strategies can help lead them towards learner independence (Gamble et al., 2018).

Enhancing teacher's roles in supporting autonomy

Teachers can support students to develop learner autonomy both in and outside the classroom.

(2004)Stefanou et al. classify autonomy support for classroom learning categories: into three organisational autonomy support, procedural autonomy support, and cognitive autonomy support. The three types, with different characteristics, provide learners with opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. Organisational autonomy support (e.g., opportunities to choose group member, seating arrangement, or deadlines) encourages ownership of the learning environment. This type of support helps learners feel more comfortable with the way the classroom works. Procedural autonomy support (e.g., opportunities to choose materials, ways of handling materials, or ways of displaying work) encourages learner ownership of form and learning output. This type of support promotes initial learning engagement. Cognitive autonomy support (e.g., opportunities to solve problems independently, formulate personal goals, or to receive informational feedback) encourages learner ownership of ideas, thinking, and learning. This type of support fosters a more enduring psychological investment in deep-level thinking.

In terms of fostering learner autonomy outside the classroom, researchers focused on favourable conditions created by the teacher to develop this capacity of learners. Important conditions include affordances or language learning opportunities that exist in the learner's linguistic environment for out-of-class learning (Menezes, 2011), materials or resources available to support out-of-class independent learning (Kocatepe, 2017; Reinders, 2011; Richards, 2015). A popular focus of many studies was technology-mediated language learning practices beyond the classroom (Kuure,

2011; Lai, 2017; Sharma & Barrett, 2011; Stickler & Emke, 2011). Some others focused on self-directed learning skills and what teachers should do to promote such practices (Doyle & Parrish, 2012; Hyland, 2004; Mohammadi & Moini, 2015).

Building teacher autonomy and teacher capacity to develop learner autonomy

Regarding teacher practice, Little (2007) suggests that teachers can foster learner autonomy by gradually allowing their students to have more control of their learning. Balcikanli (2010) recommends teachers to experience and develop autonomous skills first in their teacher training, and subsequently learners learn to take charge of their learning by following the modelling of their teachers. Making a similar argument, Smith (2003) also emphasises that teachers are also learners, and their experiences of self-direction in teacher training are helpful in fostering learner autonomy.

With a belief that changing teachers is a first step to changing learners, Benson (2011) highlights professional freedom as an important aspect of teacher autonomy. In his opinion, professional freedom is one of the important outcomes of professional development, thus, it is important that self-directed professional development activities are oriented towards the goal of learner autonomy.

Creating a favourable learning environment

It is evident in the literature that the role of the teacher in creating a supportive learning environment is important. The goal of autonomous language learning is to create an atmosphere where learners take charge of their own learning (Al-Khawlani, 2018). This means that learners could take some or all of the responsibility, both inside the classroom and outside the classroom. This includes student freedom to learn outside the teaching context and the ability to continue learning after the instruction finishes.

Regarding the contexts of application for autonomy, Benson (2007) discusses autonomy in two different perspectives: inside the classroom and beyond the classroom. The autonomy classroom might involve different levels of control such as management for learning, cognitive processes and learning content, and can be delivered in different forms such as group work, cooperative, collaborative, and other innovative learning activities. In short, "classroom context is where learner autonomy is practiced at least for learning to learn" (Joshi, 2011, p. 16). On the other hand, the autonomy beyond the classroom comprises self-access, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), distance learning, tandem learning, out of class learning, and self-instruction (Benson, 2007). Joshi (2011) suggests that to enhance the student learning approaches can be used in various forms and modes in which each mode such as self-study, library study, and

learning can be taken into consideration for a combination. Harmer (2014) also emphasises the role of out-of-class learning in developing learner autonomy. Therefore, learners need to be instructed how to continue working and studying on their own when they are not in the classroom.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the role of the teacher in developing learner autonomy was found to be significant. It is important for teachers to be aware of their great impacts on promoting learner autonomy so that they can provide appropriate forms of support. Therefore, teachers are recommended to incorporate appropriate activities into their teaching to improve these factors. First, teachers need to enhance learner awareness and skills of autonomous learning. Second, important for teachers to facilitate learner affective factors that help them become more motivated and psychologically ready for autonomous learning. Third, it is important to raise teacher awareness about their role in fostering learner autonomy. Teachers should be aware of their supporting roles in autonomy development, both within and beyond the classroom, and they should facilitate learner autonomy in both settings. Fourth, it is important to promote teacher autonomy and teacher capacity so that they have more skills and experience to develop learner autonomy. Lastly, teachers play a crucial role in creating a favourable learning environment, especially in the classroom.

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