

The Autonomous Learning Level of Speaking Skill in English Education Study Program

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the level of independent learning regarding speaking skills within the English Language Education Study Program. A quantitative descriptive design was utilized to analyze the speaking skill levels of students. A questionnaire consisting of 30 questions served as the instrument for this study. The researcher used likert scale in this research. The subjects included first-semester students from the English Language Education Study Program at the University of Bengkulu. The total population was comprised of 110 students, with 75 selected as research samples using a volunteer sampling technique, and participants volunteered for the study. The results revealed that the highest score was recorded for the statement, "I like to learn English speaking," which scored 3.59, indicating strong student interest in speaking English. Conversely, the lowest score was for the statement, "I speak English with friends," which scored 2.37, suggesting a lack of practice and confidence in using English in informal settings. These findings indicated that while students demonstrated an interest in developing their speaking skills and tried to improve, they encountered challenges in applying their knowledge in real-life situations. Overall, the learning level of independent speaking skills among first-semester English Language Education Program students was generally rated as moderate to high. Many students exhibited autonomous learning behaviors, but there was room for improvement. To further enhance students' speaking skills and foster greater autonomy in their learning process, interventions such as increased opportunities for peer interaction, structured speaking practice, and personalized learning strategies could be beneficial. These results underscore the need for targeted approaches to boost students' confidence and competence in speaking English outside the classroom.

KEYWORDS

Autonomous Learning;
Speaking Skills; Higher
Education Students

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menilai tingkat pembelajaran mandiri terkait keterampilan berbicara dalam Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Desain deskriptif kuantitatif digunakan untuk menganalisis tingkat keterampilan berbicara mahasiswa. Instrumen penelitian ini adalah kuesioner yang terdiri dari 30 pertanyaan. Peneliti menggunakan skala likert. Subjek penelitian meliputi

KATA KUNCI

Pembelajaran Autonomi;
Keterampilan berbicara;
Mahasiswa

mahasiswa semester pertama Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Bengkulu. Total populasi terdiri dari 110 mahasiswa, dengan 75 orang dipilih sebagai sampel penelitian menggunakan teknik pengambilan sampel sukarela, dan peserta secara sukarela untuk penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa skor tertinggi tercatat untuk pernyataan, "Saya suka belajar berbicara bahasa Inggris," yang mendapat skor 3,59, yang menunjukkan minat mahasiswa yang kuat dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris. Sebaliknya, skor terendah adalah untuk pernyataan, "Saya berbicara bahasa Inggris dengan teman-teman," yang mendapat skor 2,37, yang menunjukkan kurangnya latihan dan kepercayaan diri dalam menggunakan bahasa Inggris dalam suasana informal. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun mahasiswa menunjukkan minat dalam mengembangkan keterampilan berbicara mereka dan mencoba untuk meningkatkannya, mereka menghadapi tantangan dalam menerapkan pengetahuan mereka dalam situasi kehidupan nyata. Secara keseluruhan, tingkat pembelajaran keterampilan berbicara mandiri di antara mahasiswa Program Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris semester pertama secara umum dinilai sedang hingga tinggi. Banyak mahasiswa menunjukkan perilaku belajar mandiri, tetapi masih ada ruang untuk perbaikan. Untuk lebih meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara mahasiswa dan menumbuhkan otonomi yang lebih besar dalam proses pembelajaran mereka, intervensi seperti peningkatan kesempatan untuk berinteraksi dengan teman sebaya, praktik berbicara terstruktur, dan strategi pembelajaran yang dipersonalisasi dapat bermanfaat. Hasil ini menggarisbawahi perlunya pendekatan yang tepat sasaran untuk meningkatkan kepercayaan diri dan kompetensi mahasiswa dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris di luar kelas.

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INTRODUCTION

Autonomous learning in EFL classes allows students to manage their educational experiences independently. Autonomous learners do not simply follow instructions from the teacher to learn. Instead, they independently set goals, choose resources, and monitor their progress (Benson, 2017). However, fostering such autonomy can be challenging in contexts like Indonesia, where English is predominantly used only in formal educational settings. Fitriana et al. (2021) found that Indonesian students often face difficulties practicing independently due to limited opportunities to use the language outside the classroom. Additionally, Adnan and Taufiq (2020) highlight that integrating digital tools can support autonomous learning by providing accessible and flexible resources, helping learners overcome contextual limitations.

Autonomous learning is how learners control their learning by deciding what, how, and when to learn. This approach encourages students to develop self-regulation, goal-setting, and

independent problem-solving skills. Learners are empowered to take ownership of their learning journey, fostering a sense of responsibility and self-efficacy. As they become more engaged in their educational experience, students are motivated to explore new ideas and develop critical thinking skills. Autonomous learning promotes academic growth and cultivates lifelong learning habits crucial for success in the rapidly changing world (Holec, 1981). The focus is on students' ability to manage their learning process, seek out resources, monitor their progress, and reflect on their performance. This reflection leads to a deeper understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement, ultimately guiding their personal and academic development.

Various skills can be developed in learning English, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking skills and learner autonomy play a crucial role in fostering effective language acquisition. Speaking, in particular, requires regular practice and active engagement, making it essential for learners to take responsibility for their speaking progress beyond the traditional classroom setting. To improve their speaking skills, learners must seek opportunities to practice English with others, such as peers, through language exchange platforms or digital tools designed to enhance speaking abilities. Independent practice outside formal instruction helps students build fluency, accuracy, and confidence in language use. This consistent practice allows learners to internalize new vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structures. Moreover, this self-directed approach to learning supports the development of speaking skills and encourages a more autonomous learning process, where students take the initiative in their language learning journey. As learners gain confidence through these experiences, their ability to engage in real-life communication improves, improving their proficiency. According to Little (2007), when students take ownership of their learning, they are more likely to see sustained improvements in their language skills, especially in speaking, which is essential for effective communication.

The importance of this study is highlighted by the lack of research on speaking skills autonomy among students in the English Education Study Program (EESP), especially in Indonesia. While much of the existing research on learner autonomy has concentrated on writing skills, the autonomy levels of students in speaking have not been adequately explored. This gap is especially relevant in Indonesia, where English is rarely used in everyday situations, and students often rely on traditional teacher-centered approaches. As a result, fostering learner autonomy in speaking is essential for helping students develop learning independence, thus improving their motivation and proficiency in English.

The importance of this research lies in assessing the level of autonomous learning in the English Education Study Program (EESP) at the University of Bengkulu, specifically focusing on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Learner autonomy is essential as it empowers students to take ownership of their language learning process, fostering self-regulation and intrinsic motivation, which can significantly boost their academic performance. By exploring the autonomy levels within this context, this study will provide valuable insights for teachers, policymakers, and curriculum developers, guiding them in creating learning environments that nurture autonomy. Such environments promote more motivated, engaged, and effective learners who are better equipped to meet the challenges of language acquisition. Ultimately, the goal is to help students become lifelong learners who can manage their learning within the classroom and beyond it, adapting to the evolving demands of language learning in the real world.

Previous studies on learner autonomy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have predominantly focused on writing skills. Tajmirriahi and Rezvani (2021) found that students with a positive self-concept and higher academic performance exhibited greater autonomy in writing. Similarly, Sheerah and Yadav (2022) identified that self-assessment and peer review significantly improved students' autonomy and writing proficiency. These findings underscore the crucial relationship between self-concept, academic performance, and the development of learner autonomy in writing.

However, both studies are concentrated primarily on writing, leaving speaking skills underexplored. In contrast, Alharbi (2022) examined how virtual learning fosters autonomy in various skills such as listening, reading, and writing, yet did not specifically investigate speaking. Similarly, Alemu et al. (2023) found that promoting autonomy positively impacted students' reading skills. However, like Alharbi, their research did not address speaking skills, further highlighting the gap in research on speaking autonomy. This presents a clear opportunity for future research to explore autonomy within the context of speaking, a skill integral to communicative competence in EFL.

While other research acknowledges external factors such as cultural context, they often fail to address speaking autonomy specifically. Studies by Trinh (2024) and Treesattayanmunee and Baharudin (2024) investigate how interaction and cultural dimensions influence autonomy in EFL, but their focus remains broad, with limited attention to the particularities of speaking. Similarly, Khulaifayah et al. (2023) highlight the role of initial teaching activities in fostering autonomous learning, yet their study does not specifically examine speaking autonomy. This trend emphasizes the necessity for more targeted research into autonomy in speaking skills, particularly in EFL settings. By narrowing the focus to speaking, future studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how autonomy operates within each language skill, leading to more effective pedagogical strategies for fostering self-directed language learning.

Despite the extensive literature on learner autonomy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), there remains a notable gap in research focusing specifically on autonomy in speaking skills, particularly in the context of Bengkulu. Most existing studies prioritize writing or discuss autonomy in a general sense, without a targeted and in-depth analysis of speaking skills. This lack of focus on speaking represents a significant oversight, given the increasing importance of oral communication in language learning. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the autonomy levels of EFL students, specifically in terms of speaking skills. Doing so will provide valuable insights into an important yet underexplored area of learner autonomy in language education. This research will contribute to a deeper understanding of how students perceive and practice autonomy in speaking and will potentially inform instructional strategies that foster greater student independence in this critical skill.

Several studies have shown that promoting learner autonomy in EFL classrooms can significantly boost student motivation and language proficiency. Boonma and Swatevacharkul (2020) found that autonomy in public speaking courses increased language proficiency and enhanced student confidence. Their research highlighted how giving students the freedom to select topics and structure their presentations contributed to a deeper engagement with the language, fostering their linguistic and personal growth. In their study on peer teaching, Dewantono and Murtisari (2023) similarly found that autonomy could be effectively fostered by encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning and that of their peers.

By becoming both learners and teachers, students developed a sense of ownership and accountability, which enhanced their language skills and motivated them to participate more actively in the learning process.

The researchers investigated the extent of autonomous learning in speaking skills within the English Education Study Program (EESP) at the University of Bengkulu, addressing a gap in research focused on this area, particularly in the Bengkulu region. While autonomy has been studied in aspects of language learning such as writing and reading, there is limited research regarding speaking skills, which are essential for communicative competence in English. This study aims to assess the current level of autonomous learning in speaking skills among EESP students. Utilizing a descriptive quantitative method, the research will gather and analyze data to evaluate students' degree of autonomy in their speaking practices. The findings are expected to provide insights for both lecturers and students, contributing to enhanced teaching methods and the promotion of greater autonomy in speaking skills. Additionally, the results might inform the development of targeted interventions to foster autonomous classroom learning. The research question for this study is "To what extent do EFL students exhibit autonomous learning behaviors in speaking, and what factors influence their autonomy?"

METHOD

In this study, a descriptive quantitative approach was selected to measure the level of autonomy among students in the English Education Study Program (EESP), with a focus on speaking skills. This approach will present frequencies, percentages, and mean scores to provide insights into students' independent practices, strategies, and perceptions regarding their development of autonomy in speaking skills. According to Aliaga and Gunderson (2002), quantitative research aims to clarify phenomena through the collection of numerical data, which is analyzed using mathematically grounded techniques, particularly statistics. This approach helps researchers depict aspects of learner autonomy and provides statistical insights into the levels of autonomy within the English Education Study Program at the University of Bengkulu.

Population and Sample

This research aimed to gather data from the English Education Study Program, specifically focusing on first-semester students. The rationale behind selecting this group was their unique position as they transition from senior high school to university, a period that often requires significant adaptation to new learning environments and academic expectations. Understanding their level of autonomy during this critical phase was a key objective of the research. The total population for this study consisted of 110 students enrolled in the study program. To obtain a suitable sample for analysis, the researcher employed a voluntary non-probability sampling method. This approach allowed interested students to participate based on their willingness rather than random selection.

After the researchers distributed a questionnaire aimed at assessing the autonomous learning levels of first-semester students, 75 students chose to participate in the study. These 75 volunteers constitute a significant portion of the population and offer valuable insights into the autonomy of students in the English Education Study Program. In this case, the sample was 75 students.

Survey questionnaire

A survey questionnaire was utilized as the primary instrument for data collection, designed to gather information on students' levels of autonomy in speaking skills. The questionnaire, adopted from Taufiq (2010), included open-ended questions and a rating scale to quantitatively measure autonomy. A Likert scale with five options was employed: Always (4), Often (3), Sometimes (2), Seldom (1), and Never (0). The questionnaire consisted of 30 questions and was distributed to students enrolled in the English Education Study Program (EESP) to collect responses regarding their independent efforts and practices aimed at improving their English-speaking skills. The survey focused on the frequency of independent practice, the methods used to enhance speaking abilities, and students' perspectives on autonomy in their English learning process.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Responses from the questionnaires were processed to determine the average level of autonomy in speaking skills among the students. The analysis involved calculating frequencies, percentages, and mean scores to provide a clear statistical representation of the students' autonomy levels in speaking. Additionally, the researcher examined these levels using four defined levels of autonomy.

Table 1. Learner Autonomy Level

No	Score	Autonomy Level
1	1.00-1.75	Dependent
2	1.76-2.5	Barely Autonomus
3	2.51-3.25	Autonomous
4	3.26-4.00	Highly Autonomous

The researchers utilized the autonomy level table from Hati (2021) to categorize students based on their speaking skill levels. This table measures students' levels of autonomy in their speaking skills, which are divided into four categories. The lowest level of autonomy, labeled "Dependent," has a score range of 1.00 to 1.75, while the highest level, "Highly Autonomous," ranges from 3.26 to 4.00. This table served as a guide for the researchers in conducting their study.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

This section presents the research findings, which aim to answer the research questions and provide insights into the topic under study. The results are based on data collected through a questionnaire consisting of 30 questions, which were analyzed quantitatively. The findings revealed that the highest scores in the questionnaire were recorded for Question 28, Question 29, and Question 30.

Table 2. The highest score of questions

No	Questions	Score
28.	I like to learn English speaking	3.59
29.	I am interested in speaking English	3.56
30.	I make efforts to improve my english speaking	3.43

Among the three highest-scoring questions, Question 28 received the highest score of 3.59, indicating that students strongly agreed with the statement, "I like to learn English speaking." This suggests that students have a positive emotional attitude and genuine

enthusiasm for developing their English-speaking skills, which is crucial for maintaining long-term engagement in language learning. Following that, Question 29 achieved a score of 3.56, reflecting a similarly high level of interest in speaking English, as shown by the statement, "I am interested in speaking English." This score highlights the importance of students' intrinsic motivation and curiosity in their efforts to enhance their speaking skills. Their eagerness to engage with the language is vital for fostering continuous improvement. Lastly, Question 30 received a score of 3.43, indicating that students consistently strive to improve their English speaking skills, as expressed in the statement, "I make efforts to improve my English speaking." This finding suggests a proactive attitude among students, who are actively participating in various activities, strategies, and practices to enhance their speaking abilities.

The results of this research, shown in Table 3, showed that the three lowest scores for the questionnaire were observed in Question 6, Question 14, and Question 5.

Table 3. The lowest score from Questions

No	Questions	Score
6.	I speak English with friends.	2.37
14.	I make necessary changes toward my strategies	2.40
5.	I set the agenda of my speaking.	2.44

The results highlight several areas where students scored lower, suggesting potential challenges in their learning process. For instance, Question 6, "*I speak English with friends,*" received the lowest score of 2.37, indicating that students may lack confidence or opportunities to practice speaking English with their peers. This low confidence could stem from various factors, such as fear of making mistakes, anxiety about peer judgment, or limited exposure to English conversations in daily interactions. Further investigation is needed to understand the specific reasons behind this hesitation.

Similarly, Question 14, "*I make necessary changes to my strategies,*" scored 2.40, suggesting difficulties in adapting or refining learning approaches. Additionally, Question 5, "*I set my speaking agenda,*" received a score of 2.44, implying that students may require more guidance and encouragement in setting personal goals for speaking practice.

These lower scores underscore the need to address issues related to motivation and self-regulation. Students may struggle with monitoring their progress or have yet to develop effective strategies for adjusting their learning methods. Providing additional support in goal-setting, strategic reflection, and peer collaboration could help them overcome these challenges. By fostering confidence in speaking and promoting effective learning habits, students are more likely to enhance their language proficiency and overall success in their learning journey.

The results of this research show in Table 4 that students' levels of autonomous learning in speaking skills were distributed across four categories, each reflecting different degrees of independence in their learning process. These categories are "Dependent," "Barely Autonomous," "Autonomous," and "Highly Autonomous." The findings clarify how students in the English Education Study Program at the University of Bengkulu approach their speaking practice and how autonomous they are in managing their learning. These findings showed that the level of students' autonomous learning varied across four categories. The highest percentage was in the "Autonomous" category, with 36 students (48%). This was followed by "Highly Autonomous," with 25 students (33%). The "Barely Autonomous" category included 12 students (16%), while only two students (3%) were classified as "Dependent."

Table 4. Result for Autonomous Learning Level of Speaking Skill in The English Education Study Program

No	Autonomy Level	Number of students	Percentage
1	Dependent	2	3%
2	Barely Autonomus	12	16%
3	Autonomous	36	48%
4	Highly Autonomous	25	33%

These findings indicate that 48% of the students demonstrated an "Autonomous" level of learning in speaking skills, which suggests that they possess the ability to take substantial initiative in their language learning process. These students are capable of setting their own learning objectives, monitoring their progress, and actively engaging in practices that promote language development. This level of autonomy is crucial for successful language learning as it indicates that students are more self-sufficient and motivated to improve their speaking skills.

A significant portion of students (33%) achieved a "Highly Autonomous" level, reflecting their advanced self-directed learning skills. These students not only set clear goals and track their progress but also demonstrate the ability to adjust their learning strategies based on their experiences. Their high level of autonomy indicates that they are proactive in seeking opportunities to practice and refine their speaking skills, often relying on their internal motivation to persist in language learning despite challenges. This group represents an ideal scenario where students take full ownership of their learning process.

However, the presence of students in the "Dependent" and "Barely Autonomous" categories signals that not all students are equally equipped to engage in autonomous learning. With only 3% of students classified as "Dependent" and 16% in the "Barely Autonomous" category, this indicates that there is still a considerable portion of the student body who struggle with taking the initiative and may rely more on external guidance, such as teacher direction or peer support. These students may struggle to set personal learning goals, evaluate their progress, or adjust their strategies when necessary. This lack of autonomy suggests that further support and targeted interventions are necessary to help these students develop the skills and mindset required to become more self-directed in their learning.

To foster greater autonomy among these learners, it is essential to provide structured opportunities for independent practice, encourage self-reflection, and offer guidance on how to set and achieve personal language learning goals. Additionally, providing a supportive learning environment that boosts students' confidence and motivation will be key in helping them transition from a more dependent learning style to a more autonomous one. In summary, while many students demonstrate strong autonomous learning skills, efforts should be made to empower those in the "Barely Autonomous" and "Dependent" categories, enabling them to take more control over their learning and ultimately improve their speaking skills.

Discussion

The results of this study provide insights into the levels of autonomy among students in their English-speaking skills within the English Language Education Study Program. The study categorized students into four levels of autonomy: Dependent, Barely Autonomous, Autonomous, and Highly Autonomous. The findings indicate that 48% of students were rated as Autonomous, 33% as Highly Autonomous, 16% as Barely Autonomous, and 3% as

Dependent. These results suggest that a majority of students exhibit significant levels of self-directed learning, while a smaller percentage may require additional support to enhance their autonomy.

Students categorized as Autonomous and Highly Autonomous displayed characteristics typical of autonomous learners. These individuals typically set personal goals, employ effective learning strategies, and take the initiative to improve their speaking skills outside of a structured classroom environment. This behavior aligns with Holec's (1981) definition of autonomy, in which learners take responsibility for their own educational processes. Several factors may have contributed to the high level of autonomy observed among these students. First, the curriculum design of English Language Education Programs can incorporate activities that promote self-directed learning, such as specific assignments. Additionally, lecturers can provide autonomy-supportive feedback and scaffolding, which empower students to develop independent learning habits. This finding is supported by recent studies, such as Rahman et al. (2021), which indicate that flexible yet structured curricula can enhance learner autonomy in speaking skills. Similarly, Chen (2020) emphasized the crucial role of instructors in fostering autonomy through a learner-centered approach.

Students categorized as Almost Autonomous and Dependent demonstrate a need for targeted self-development. These students often encounter challenges such as low motivation, lack of confidence, and insufficient skills to manage their learning independently. Additionally, limited opportunities for real-world speaking practice and inadequate guidance in developing autonomy can further impede their progress. This observation aligns with the findings of Wu and Zhang (2019), who identified similar barriers among Asian EFL learners. Moreover, Ahmad and Latif (2022) highlighted the potential of technology-based tools, such as AI-powered language applications, to mitigate disruptions in autonomous learning by offering personalized support and feedback.

Promoting higher levels of autonomy among students requires a comprehensive approach. Educators can begin by conducting workshops focused on goal setting, teaching students how to create specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for their speaking practice. Reflective practices, such as maintaining a learning journal, can help students consolidate their progress and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, peer collaboration through activities like speaking practice and peer feedback can build students' confidence and independence. These strategies are supported by evidence, such as a study by Sun and Dornyei (2023), which demonstrated a significant impact of reflective practices on learners' ability to self-regulate their language learning process.

For learners with lower levels of autonomy, interventions should aim to build foundational skills and motivation. Low-stakes speaking activities that gradually enhance skills can help learners gain confidence. Workshops on effective learning strategies, such as time management and resource utilization, have also been beneficial. Furthermore, mentoring programs that pair low-autonomous learners with highly autonomous peers can provide guidance and inspiration. Kurniawan and Putri (2022) highlighted the success of a mentoring program in increasing the level of autonomy among Indonesian EFL learners by fostering a supportive learning environment.

The findings of this study align with previous research highlighting the significance of learner autonomy in language acquisition. Pioneering works by Benson (2001) and Little (1991) emphasize that autonomy enhances not only language proficiency but also lifelong

learning skills. Similar to this study, they identified variations in learners' autonomy levels and underscored the need for tailored pedagogical approaches.

More specifically, past research on autonomy in speaking skills provides further insight into this issue. Rahimi and Pourgharib (2020) demonstrated that students with higher levels of autonomy tend to exhibit greater confidence and fluency in speaking, as they actively engage in self-regulated learning and communicative tasks. This contrasts with the current study's findings, where lower autonomy levels corresponded with hesitation in speaking and limited peer interaction. Moreover, Wang et al. (2021) explored how cultural and institutional factors shape speaking autonomy, emphasizing that students in more autonomy-supportive environments are more likely to take initiative in speaking activities. These studies suggest that autonomy is a crucial factor in developing speaking proficiency, reinforcing the need for targeted interventions that promote self-directed speaking practice.

Cultural and contextual factors significantly influence learner autonomy in English Language Education programs. In Indonesia, the prevalent collectivist culture may lead students to rely heavily on teacher guidance and to prefer structured learning environments. Acknowledging these cultural dimensions is essential for designing interventions that respect students' backgrounds while promoting autonomy. Lin and Chang (2022) observed that well-designed interventions aligned with cultural values can effectively enhance self-regulated learning, even in collectivist cultures.

This study has limitations. It focused exclusively on student autonomy in speaking skills, leaving other language domains, such as writing and listening, unexplored. The reliance on self-reported data via questionnaires may introduce bias, as students might overestimate or underestimate their level of autonomy. Additionally, the sample size could be improved in future studies to yield more generalizable results. Future research could examine the effectiveness of specific interventions for promoting autonomy and explore the role of technology, such as language learning apps, in supporting self-regulated learning. Gupta and Lee (2024) highlighted the potential of AI tools to offer personalized learning experiences and enhance autonomy.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the autonomy levels of students at the University of Bengkulu enrolled in the EESP program, with a particular focus on their speaking skills. The results reveal that a significant proportion of these students exhibit a high degree of autonomy, with many classified as "Autonomous" or "Highly Autonomous." This categorization indicates their proactive engagement in setting learning objectives, utilizing effective strategies, and independently practicing their speaking abilities. In contrast, a smaller subset of the student population is found to be "Barely Autonomous" or "Dependent," suggesting barriers that impede their ability to achieve full autonomy in their learning processes. The findings emphasize the critical importance of promoting autonomy in language acquisition, especially concerning spoken language proficiency. To cultivate autonomy, it is essential to integrate pedagogical approaches and curricula that facilitate independent learning. For example, educators can design tasks that require students to take charge of their learning, such as developing personalized speaking projects or engaging in self-assessment activities. Empowering students to navigate their educational journeys is likely to enhance their autonomous learning capacity.

However, the study is not without limitations. The reliance on self-reported data presents potential biases, as participants may inaccurately assess their own capabilities. Additionally, focusing exclusively on EESP students at one institution restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts or different educational environments. Another limitation is the cross-sectional design, which captures autonomy levels at a singular moment in time. Although this provides a snapshot, it fails to account for longitudinal changes. Future research employing a longitudinal methodology would be beneficial to observe the evolution of autonomy over time and identify the factors influencing it.

Future research could explore specific interventions that enhance student autonomy, such as structured self-regulated learning programs, digital learning tools, or personalized goal-setting frameworks. Examining the direct impact of intrinsic motivation, teacher scaffolding techniques, and peer collaboration on autonomous learning through experimental or longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights. Additionally, adopting a mixed-methods approach integrating surveys with in-depth interviews or classroom observations would help capture both statistical trends and nuanced learner experiences. A comparative study of autonomy levels at different proficiency stages, using targeted instructional strategies for beginners versus advanced learners, could inform best practices for scaffolding independence. For instance, novice learners might benefit from guided reflection journals or scaffolded task-based learning, whereas advanced students could engage in self-directed projects or peer mentoring. These findings would enable educators to develop evidence-based strategies for fostering autonomy at various learning stages.

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