# Students' Perception of Autonomous Learning Activities in English Language Teaching and Learning Context at One of Public Senior High School in Jambi

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**Abstract**

The autonomous learning activities are an approach and process in which individuals are responsible for their learning. The aim of this research is to identify students' perceptions of autonomous learning in English language teaching. The autonomous learning itself also related to the vision and mission of the ministry of education, which is "*Merdeka Belajar*". The method of this research was quantitative method, by using five Likert scale. The questionnaire was adopted from Khem Raj Joshi (2011). It contains 18 statements classified into seven implicit components: *learner awareness, self-effort, broader autonomous activities, self-esteem, use of reference materials, motivation, and use a technology in learning*. The sample of this research was students majoring in science at one of the public school in Ma. Jambi. The results of this study indicate that, in general, student learning autonomously is still at the secondary level, but in detail, in certain aspects, it is at a low level. The significance arising from this research is: knowing students' perceptions about their learning autonomy can help EFL teachers, material and curriculum developers, and supporting material to encourage student learning independence. In addition, it significantly contributed ideas about independent learning in the EFL context. Because in this globalization era, English as a foreign language in Indonesia needs to have more exposure in terms of opportunities in autonomous learning activities, so that students' awareness of learning responsibilities can be achieved.

**Keywords**: *Student; perception; outonomous; learning; activity*

**Abstrak**

*Autonomous Learning* (pembelajaran mandiri/otonomi belajar) adalah suatu pendekatan dan proses di mana individu bertanggung jawab atas pembelajaran mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki persepsi siswa tentang kegiatan belajar mandiri terhadap pelajaran Bahasa Inggris di SMA. Pembelajaran mandiri juga erat kaitannya dengan visi dan misi Kementrian Pendidikan Indonesia yaitu "Merdeka Belajar". Metode penelitian ini adalah penelitian kuantitatif dengan menggunakan skala likert. Kuesioner diadopsi dari penelitian sebelumnya oleh Khem Raj Joshi (2011), yang mana mengandung 18 pernyataan yang kemudian diklasifikasikan menjadi 7 komponen. Sampel dari penelitian ini adalah anak 100 orang siswa jurusan IPA di salah satu SMA Negeri di Ma. Jambi. Hasil penelitian ini

menunjukkan bahwa, secara umum, kemandirian belajar siswa masih di tingkat menengah, tetapi secara rinci, dalam beberapa aspek tertentu, berada di tingkat rendah. Signifikansi yang timbul dari penelitian ini adalah: mengetahui persepsi siswa tentang otonomi belajar mereka dapat membantu guru EFL, pengembang materi dan kurikulum, dan materi pendukung untuk mendorong kemandirian belajar siswa. Selain itu, secara signifikan menyumbangkan ide tentang pembelajaran mandiri dalam konteks EFL. Sebab di era globalisasi ini, Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing di Indonesia perlu memiliki lebih banyak paparan dalam hal peluang padakegiatan pembelajaran mandiri, sehingga kesadaran siswa tentang tanggung jawab belajar dapat tercapai.

**Kata kunci**: *Persepsi; siswa; aktivitas; belajar; mandiri*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The changing of the curriculum influences the policy of English subject in school. A member of the English teacher's forum said that time allocation is the foremost problem that exist in English language teaching. It is only two hours in a week for the teacher in delivering their topic in the classroom. In fact that English is one of the subjects that is assessed in the students' examination. This is a tremendous challenge for the English language teacher in giving some kinds of materials that must be related to the demand of the curriculum. The portion given may not be sufficient to meet the needs and expectation of students to master English.

To successfully communicate in English, students need to organize and direct their learning independently in and outside the school. Harmer (2007) suggests to balance class time and intensify opportunities for learning and obtaining successful language, students need to encourage to expanding their learning methods in order to make independent students. In another condition, Egel (2009) states that he is responsible for improving their education, empowering students and preparing them for sustainable learning in life. In addition, Harmer (2007) suggests

that most teachers who want to talk to students about wanting to become independent students. Nevertheless, simply telling students about autonomy in some respects will have little impact other than if it is part of a broader course design, and unless we find ways to help students become more independent.

Hence, concept of autonomy learning should be discussed further, particularly in terms of students' perception of it. Students' perception of learning autonomy is indeed pivotal to construct teachers' and any other educational doers' concept in initiating students to be autonomous. The students' experience of views, reactions, and behaviors has been useful specifically in building a huge understanding of them. In this situation, the problem turns out to be the students' understanding of learner autonomy. Every student may have different perspective and ways of reacting to certain aspects. Furthermore, a person believes about a phenomenon (such as their conceptions) affects their expectation or goals (Ajzen, 2005).

Therefore, after giving the importance of knowing students' understanding in learner autonomy, this paper is aimed to present thoroughly students' perception on learning autonomy. Furthermore, the learning autonomy exposed in this research

will be directed to a gorup of students in senior high school. The researcher chooses these participants based on the consideration from the guidance and counseling teacher, who says that a member of students are more motivated in learning if they are compared to social students. Thus, the researcher selected the participant with the assumption that this can be the measurement and comparison of a group of students, majoring in social science who well known as less motivated students. In addition, a group of students can be the representation of motivated students in learning autonomously.

Therefore, this research will be conducted learning autonomy topic to a gorup of students. When students' understanding has been diagnosed, teachers and other educational doers could get the vision of how to design strategies in building students' learning autonomy.

This research has decided to answer a single research question: what are the perceptions of the students regarding their autonomous learning activities?

Razeq (2014), in his study of University EFL learners perceptions of their autonomous learning responsibilities and abilities reported that as a result of past educational experiences, in learners were accustomed to putting the blame for the success or failure of their language acquisition on their teachers through their previous educational experiences. Nevertheless, the participants reported that if they had opportunity to do so, they had the ability to learn independently. A test showed that gender and performance level did not play significant role in terms of the expectation of students regarding their ability to engage in autonomous learning activities.

Furthermore, Scheb-Buenner (2018) on his study of University students' perception on autonomous learning: a case of private University, Thailand also reported that the students did not certainly know the concepts of autonomy as well. For aspect of managing learning and evaluation, the respondents perceived it was both teachers' and students' roles together. A majority of respondents (89%) perceived that they were autonomous learners; however, their explanation reflected the limited scope of autonomous learning styles. It means that students may have misconceptions about the concept of autonomous learning, additionally the teachers show similar ideas. Therefore, the implication of this study is that autonomous learning should be provided as formal instruction or guidelines.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Research Design
This survey research is using quantitative methods. A survey design offers a quantitative or statistical summary of a population's pattern, behaviors, or view, through analyzing a sample of that population, according to Cresswell (2003). The term 'survey' is commonly applied to are research methodology designed to gather data from a specific population, or a sample from that population, which typically uses a questionnaire or interviews as the survey instrument (Robson, 1993). The review of the survey is carried out by a group of students at one of public school in Ma.Jambi. The research goal is to investigate the understanding of the students about their autonomous learning activities. The results are supposed to be useful in establishing recommendations to work integrating autonomous learning for teachers and other educationalist.

## 2.2.Data Collection

### Sample

A hundred students majoring in science were selected to be the research sample, using purposeful sampling techniques; the sampling technique focuses on the unit analyzes based on the opinion of the research whose specific characteristic would effectively assist the researcher in the conduct of the analysis..

### Instrumentation

This study utilized a set of questionnaire generated by Khem Raj Joshi (2011). It contains 18 statements classified into seven implicit components: *learner awareness, self-effort, broader autonomous activities, self-esteem, use of reference materials, motivation, and use a technology in learning*. The researcher considers this questionnaire is highly relevant and appropriate to seek the answer of the research question proposed because the questionnaire and the study are in line to this issue. Moreover, based on the previous research, this questionnaire is claimed as a well-designed configuration.

### Procedure

Questionnaire for the students was administered to a group of students, with 100 students were selected as the sample of this study that was conducted at one of public senior high school in Ma.Jambi. The researcher got the access in delivering a questionnaire from the guidance and counceling teacher as the teacher who has a responsibilty to control these students. The teacher helped the researcher in giving this questionnaire to 100 students. Thirty minutes were given for the students to finish all the questionnaire items. Only 91 questionnaires were returned to the teacher, while the rest of the questionnares were not sent back.

## 2.3.Data Analysis

The data were categorized into seven components based on the study by Khem Raj Joshi (2011): *learner awareness, self-effort, broader autonomous activities, self-esteem, use of reference materials, motivation, and use a technology in learning*. The data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics. The analysis of the questionnaire is based on Oxford's (1990) and the classification is based on the of means of the data. Mean score that ranged between 1.0 and 2.4 were considered as 'low'. Mean score that ranged between 2.5 and 3.4 were regarded as 'medium'. Mean score that ranged between 3.4 and 5.0 were regarded as 'hight'.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This segment displays the result based on single research question formulated; what are the perceptions of the students regarding their autonomous learning activities?. The perception possessed by the students is uncovered by using descriptive statistics. Based on the data obtained, it is implied that the vast majority of the students think that their learning autonomy in term of *learner awareness, self-effort, broader autonomous activities, self-esteem, use of reference materials, motivation,* are good but still in the medium level. It is only the *use a technology in learning* which has a high level accomplishment as one of the autonomous learning activities exposed by this questionnaire. Those seven aspects are elaborated as follows;

**Learners awareness in English learning**

Table 1. Learners' Awareness in English Learning.

| No | Statement | Never (%) | Rarely (%) | Sometimes (%) | Often (%) | Always (%) | Mean |
|----|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------|-----------|------------|------|
| 1. | I think I can learn English well | 2.2 | 8.8 | 58.2 | 16.5 | 14.3 | 3.32 |
| 2. | I make decision and set goals for my learning | 0 | 8.8 | 14.3 | 49.5 | 27.5 | 3.96 |
| 3. | I make good use of my free time studying English | 5.5 | 33.0 | 45.1 | 12.1 | 4.4 | 2.27 |
| Grand Mean | | | | | | | 3.32 |

Based on the data obtained, with the grand mean value 3.32, the students are regarded to have a medium *learner awareness* level. Nearly half of the students say they have the ability to learn English well and to make decision and set their learning objectives. The student also submitted that they sometimes use their free time to learn English. The vast majority tends to choose 'sometimes' rather than 'often', or 'always'. In a word, the result does not happen as expected.

**a. Self-Effort**

Table 2. Learners self-effort in English learning.

| No | Statement | Never (%) | Rarely (%) | Sometimes (%) | Often (%) | Always (%) | Mean |
|----|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------|-----------|------------|------|
| 4. | I preview before the class (such as see a summary, lesson, etc) | 1.1 | 40.7 | 42.9 | 13.2 | 2.2 | 2.75 |
| 5. | In the class, I try to use every opportunity to take part in the activities where and when I can speak in English | 9.9 | 41.8 | 26.4 | 16.5 | 5.5 | 2.66 |
| 6. | I speak confidently in front of the people | 1.1 | 13.2 | 39.6 | 29.7 | 16.5 | 3.47 |
| 7. | I make notes and summaries of my lessons | 0 | 9.9 | 26.4 | 50.5 | 13.2 | 3.67 |

| 8. | I talk to the teachers and friends outside the class in English | 27.5 | 46.2 | 16.5 | 7.7 | 2.2 | 2.11 |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Grand Mean | | | | | | | 2.93 |

Based on the data obtained, with the grand mean value 2.93, the students are regarded to have medium *self-effort* level. In detail, however the result is highly varied. It is around 50% of the students claimed that they rarely preview the material before coming to the classroom. Students reasoned that they are including a passive students and hesitate to declare as a confidence students in saying some words in English. In addition, the students don't take the opportunity to speak with their teacher. It is 46.2% of the students rarely talk to their teacher and friend outside the class.

### b. Learners' Broader Autonomous Activities in English Learning
Table 3. learners broaders autonomous activities in English learning.

| No | Statement | Never (%) | Rarely (%) | Sometimes (%) | Often (%) | Always (%) | Mean |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 9. | I practice English outside the class also such as record my voice; speak to other people in English | 25.3 | 35.2 | 16.5 | 15.4 | 7.7 | 2.45 |
| 10. | I use the library to improve my English | 38.5 | 40.7 | 17.6 | 3.3 | 0 | 1.86 |
| 11. | I use audio-visual materials to develop my speech such as listen to BBC, watch English movie, read English newspaper, etc | 8.8 | 24.2 | 34.2 | 30.8 | 12.1 | 3.13 |
| 12. | I attend different seminars, training course, conferences (such as NELTA) to improve my English | 47.3 | 33.0 | 13.2 | 6.6 | 0 | 1.79 |
| 13. | I take in risk in learning the English language | 18.7 | 34.1 | 27.5 | 12.1 | 7.7 | 2.56 |
| Grand Mean | | | | | | | 2.36 |

Based on the mean value obtained (2.36) in this category, broader autonomous activities done by the students are generally in the lower level. The vast majority of the students rarely and even never practice English out of class, such as; go to the library to find some references and attending different seminars, training

course, conference to improve their English. However, there is one item in this category which is considered to have a medium level, the majority of the students often use audio-visual materials to develop their speech, such as; listen to BBC, watch English movies, read English newspaper, etc.

**Self-esteem**

Table 4. Learners self-esteem in English Learning.

| No | Statement | Never (%) | Rarely (%) | Sometimes (%) | Often (%) | Always (%) | Mean |
|----|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------|-----------|------------|------|
| 14. | I note my strengths and weaknesses in learning English and improve them | 14.3 | 27.5 | 36.3 | 16.5 | 5.5 | 2.71 |

The result of this category is classified into medium level, even though it is almost close to the lower level. The mean values of this item, show that students not doing well in noting their strength and weaknesses in learnging English. The students choice are spread to all scales: 14.3% of the students accept that they never consider and develop their strength and weaknesses in learning English, 27.5% of them rarely do it, 36.3% of them sometimes do it, 16.5% of them often do it, and 5.5% of them always do it.

**Uses of reference materials**

Tabel 5. Uses of reference materials in English Learning.

| No | Statement | Never (%) | Rarely (%) | Sometimes (%) | Often (%) | Always (%) | Mean |
|----|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------|-----------|------------|------|
| 15. | I revise lessons and seek reference books | 2.2 | 25.3 | 48.4 | 18.7 | 5.5 | 3.00 |
| 16. | Besides the contents prescribed in the course, I read extra materials in advance | 2.2 | 20.9 | 35.2 | 31.9 | 9.9 | 3.26 |
| Grand Mean | | | | | | | 3.13 |

The result of this category indicates students are showing their use of medium level reference materials. The mean values of these 2 items show that students have efforts in revising and reading extra materials.

**Motivation**

Table 6. Learners motivation in English Learning.

| No | Statement | Never (%) | Rarely (%) | Sometimes (%) | Often (%) | Always (%) | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. | When I make progress in learning, I reward myself such as: buy a new things, celebrate parties, ets | 30.8 | 23.1 | 27.5 | 14.3 | 4.4 | 2.38 |

Even though students' responses are spread to the five scales, by observing the mean value of this item, we could see that students have low motivation in English learning. The majority (30.8%) of them think that they never advance in learning, they reward themselves, for example; buy a new things, celebrate parties. Etc, 23.1% of them even state that they rarely do them.

**Using technology**

Tabel 7. Learniers use of technology in English Learning.

| No | Statement | Never (%) | Rarely (%) | Sometimes (%) | Often (%) | Always (%) | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18. | I use the internet and computers to study and improve English | 1.1 | 16.5 | 23.1 | 29.7 | 29.7 | 3.70 |

Among 7 categories in this questionnaire, this category achieve the highest mean value (4.07). It indicates that students mostly use the internet and computers to learn English and develop it, only 1,1% of them think that they never or rarely use the internet and computers to study and improve their English ability.

Regarding the students' overall perceptions of the autonomous learning activities and plan, the results reveal that students place themselves to the medium level in term of their learning's awareness, self-effort, self-esteem, and use of reference material. An in a low level of autonomous activities and motivation in English learning. It is dissimilar with the result of Joshi's study (2011) which utilized the same questionnaire. His study revealed that students place themselves to a higher level in terms of autonomous learning activities and plan. He found that the learners are doing a good practice of autonomous activities. They view their role as an important factor in learning. However, his study showed that the students used technology less to improve their English. It is, on the contrary, to the present study. The present study shows that students are highly interested in using technology such as the internet and computers to improve their English. Among the 7 aspects investigated, this aspect surprisingly becomes the most enjoyed way in fostering their learning autonomy.

In specifics, there are several particular autonomous activities which found to be

negatively abandoned by the students. The overwhelming majority of the students agree they do not preview the materials, or read extra materials in advance. It is implied that they regard a teacher as the only one mediator between them and the materials, there is no effort they spend to be independent in working on the materials. Besides, it is also found that they do not use the library, or attend training courses to improve their English. It means that their dependency on their class activity is highly realized. Furthermore, they state that they do not practice English outside the class. Again, it indicates that 'the class' becomes the only one zone for their language exposure. Lastly, they do not find themselves doing self-motivated activity such as giving rewards to them when they make progress in learning. It indicates that they have low effort in making themselves motivated in the learning process. Regarding these results, teachers hopefully can be more effortful in fostering their students to be autonomous. It is can be associated with what Chan (2001) proposes after she conducted the similar study. She suggests that to make student autonomy in learning, the teacher should provide opportunities for more students' involvement in the classroom activities, and provide learning conditions in the classroom to stimulate interest and motivation. It is in line with Sinclair's theory (2000), he argues autonomy is about putting learners in circumstances where they need to be autonomous.

## 4. CONCLUSSIONS

The results of this study indicate that, in general, students' learning autonomy is still in the medium level, but in details, in some particular aspects, it is at the low level. They expect their teacher to succeed

their learning achievement, while they do not spend any independent efforts to support them. Significances arising from this study are: knowing students' perception of their learning autonomy is able to assist EFL teachers, material and curriculum developers, and administrators to construct supporting programs and materials to foster students' learning autonomy. Besides, by conducting such research, it can significantly contribute the ideas of how learning autonomy in EFL context is encouraged. English as a foreign language in Indonesia and its importance in this period of globalization need to be revealed more urgently in terms of opportunities for autonomous activities, so that students' awareness of their learning responsibility is achieved. Moreover, by being autonomous, they are expected to be more creative and be a lifelong learner.

Furthermore, based on the result revealed, there are several suggestions addressed by the present researcher: (1) teachers have to encourage their students to involve in outside-classroom assignments so that their autonomous action can be constructed, and prevent them from becoming an 'obedient-learner" in a wrong way, (2) teachers and material developers should consider students' interest and learning style when designing the materials, activities, and also assessments so they can willingly do the tasks given independently and enjoyably without being forced, (3) teachers need to be provided by a regular training which incorporates strategy of learning autonomy development, so teachers' practical and pedagogical knowledge can be built up well.

In conclusion, the present study only focuses on investigating students' perception on EFL learning autonomy for students. Future studies are expected to

explore more at all levels and different educational context. Besides, teachers' perception of learning autonomy is also important to be studied. Therefore, understanding the relationship between the learning autonomy level of the students and their learning achievement is also important, as it is extremely possible that their achievement will be affected by their learning autonomy.

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