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Research Paper

Investigating the Effect of Raising EFL Teachers' Awareness of Learner Autonomy on Students' L2 Motivation in EFL Learning

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Abstract

eee curre yyyyerrrrr r effec o raiii EFL teache''' aaa reee o aaæeer ammmmmmm , tt Itt lllly, a questionnaire adapted from Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) aeeeeeeæeæe''' eeiiess a nne ammmmmmtfee EFL eeæers unaware of the concept of autonomy in EFL learning were selected based on their responses and were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. To evaluate student''' tt accc (2010) L2 motivation questionnaire was use . Baee eeeeeeee eeeeaeeee 000 initially lacking motivation in L2 learning were selected. Afterwards, these students were divided evenly between the two teacher groups. The experimental group teachers attended a ten-hour workshop on autonomy. The treatment involved a comprehensive workshop focusing on aaacc eee aaccnnn''' aaa eene a ddder aaarner autonomy. The workshop covered topics such as the principles of learner autonomy, practical strategies to promote autonomous learning, and the benefits of fostering an autonomous learning environment. Teachers engaged in interactive sessions, group discussions, and practical activities to translate theoretical concepts into classroom practices. After instructional phase, the same questionnaires were administered to assess 'ttt nnnnnnfluctuation. Independent sample t-test analysis showed a significant difference in posttest scores between nnnnnnncores in both groups. Data analysis showed a significant improvement in motivation among students taught by teachers who had attended the workshop. The study concludes that teacher training focused on learner ammmmmmmiiii iii alll eaaacce ' tt ion, with important implications for curriculum design and educational policy in the Iranian EFL context.

Keywords: Autonomy, Autonomous Learning, Language Learning Strategies, Motivation, Teachers' Awareness of Learner Autonomy.

Introduction

Teachers are fundamental to any educational system, as they are responsible for initiating, facilitating, and implementing instructional changes. The success of educational reforms largely depends on teachers' understanding, collaboration, reflection, and action (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2011). In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), what teachers believe about learner autonomy (LA) directly influences how much they promote it and the opportunities they provide for students to learn independently.

The lack of teacher awareness and training in the concept of autonomy is a major barrier to effective EFL learning (Mehdiyev, 2020). A teacher who is well-trained in autonomous learning principles can be expected to be more effective both in theoretical knowledge and practical application. Raising EFL gggee''' aaa eene a e mm classroom learning and motivating students to take responsibility for their language development. Teachers' knowledge of autonomous learning enables them to choose suitable strategies that aaa cc eaaaane''' tttt aaaa maa eeaaaeee eeeeeeee e

Autonomy is now a central focus in EFL teaching because of its role in fostering student motivation, which leads to more effective learning (Bhattacharya & Chauhan, 2010; Liu, 2012; Sanprasert, 2010). Learners who are empowered to take control of their learning are more likely to maintain their motivation over time. In the Iranian education system, English is introduced as a foreign language in the seventh grade. However, despite its compulsory status, many students struggle to achieve proficiency in English. The challenges of teaching English in Iran are exacerbated by the teacher-centered nature of classrooms, where students have limited opportunities to take control of their own learning (Ghorbani-Nejad, 1999; Lak et al., 2017; Shatery, 2012). Iranian classrooms are often overcrowded, which restricts interaction and individual tteiii cttt iiiiii iii eeiiacce teacher as the central figure in the learning process.

In contrast, private language schools in Iran tend to adopt more learner-centered approaches, offering smaller class sizes and a teaching style that encourages student participation and independent learning (Borjian, 2013; Pazhouhesh, 2014). Students who attend these private schools generally perform better than those who rely solely on public school instruction, highlighting the importance of teaching methods that promote autonomy and active engagement (Khani, 2003). In Iranian schools, opportunities for students to use English outside the classroom are limited. Students are often confined to practicing English in formal settings, which makes it difficult for them to develop the language skills needed for real-life communication. This situation underscores the importance of fostering learner autonomy, as students need to be able to take responsibility for their own learning beyond the classroom. The other reason for the significance of recognizing learner autonomy is its potential effect on improving their motivation.

Motivation is considered as one of the determining factors in EFL teaching and learning process (Feng et al., 2013; Al-Munawwarah et al., 2018). In fact, motivation is an unchallengeable phenomenon; yet, its complex and multidimensional nature has not been thoroughly understood (Lucas et al., 2010). Motivation is needed as an important factor for success in learning English as a foreign or second language, even though creating motivation among learners can be a challenge. English learners' motivation levels are far less than those who live in ESL settings (Bai & Wang, 2023).

Given the importance of both psychological and sociological factors in the development of learning, this study aims to explore the potential effects of teachers' knowledge of autonomy on EFL learners. The present study intends to investigate the effect of Iranian high

cc L aaæee''' awaæee cccc e o ammmmmnn tt efec rrrrrr''''''' 'L2 motivation. More specifically, the following questions are posed for this study:

RQ1: eee FFL eeacher''' aaa eene eaeee ammmmyh have any significant effect on their teaching practices?

RQ2mne FFL eeaceer''' eeeeeee eee eanne ammmmmnnmee ayy iiii iii a efec FFLeeæeerr'ttttt ttttttt

Review of the Literature

Teachers are considered as the most important component of any system of education, and the adequacy of education depends on the effectiveness of the teachers in that educational system (Aghaei et al., 2023; Teng, 2019). As an essential predictor of teacht cccce eacee''' awareness of autonomy plays a pivotal role in language teaching and learning. According to the Vygotskian model of learning, promoting autonomous learning is essential to the creation of a learner-centered environment, which is one of the essential prerequisites of having a successful language classroom. In fact, in such an environment, both individual differences and individual eee eanne ca be arrr e h ca aaa aaæee''' uucces ciice rrrr & Alshumaimeri, 2019).

According to Esteban (2022), autonomy refers to the capacity for self-direction, exercised in planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning activities. It encompasses both the content and process of learning, and signifies the state of being self-governing, making independent decisions without external control (Chong & Reinders, 2022). It is a commonly held view that language learning is greatly enhanced when a student has control over the goals and the content of a course of study (Lengkanawati, 2017; Pichugova et al., 2016). Teachers who are aware of the significance of learner autonomy can help students to develop in a number of ways. Teachers need to constantly reflect on their own role in the classroom, monitoring the extent to which they constrain ccaf iii eaaaii rr oo as to engage students in autonomous and effective learning (Stockwell, 2023).

According to Benson (2008), a teacher has a leading role in the development of learner autonomy and should create an environment that supports learner autonomy and raise their awareness of ineeeedden aaa eacee''' eeee eeaadde as a oraaii ze a anattt a help learners to take responsibility by setting their own goals, planning practice opportunities and assessing their progress (Al Asmari, 2013). Zhuang (2010) pointed out that teachers do not only have the role of knowledge transferor, but they also have the roles of consultant and facilitator who provide psychological, social, and technical support for their students. Yunus and Arshad (2015) argued that in order to develop learner autonomy, teachers have to provide necessary assistance to help learners to be more independent inside and outside the classroom.

Lack of EFL instru '''aaa eene a aaii ootion of autonomy in English language teaching and learning ca ee ciili eere a a rrrrr raaaaaaace aaæee''' aaaciical progress in learning English as a foreign language and can affect their own beliefs and practices (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). With the emphasis of autonomous learning in English education, EFL teachers are faced with the challenge of developing and implementing new teaching programs a aooooache an efeciiiee mrvvve uucce''' ammmmmnnm learning capacity, which in turn may initia a sssta aaæee''' ttt FFL aaa arner autonomy does not mean learning without the teacher or letting the students learn alone without a guide, but it can mean taking responsibility for their own learning (Nielsen, 2019) which requires motivation as an important requirement.

Motivation in second language learning has been the subject of a considerable amount of research in recent decades (Ahmed & Hossain, 2024; Al-Hoorie & Hiver, 2024; Aryadoust et al., 2024; Chen & Ramzan, 2024; Liu et al., 2024; Tai & Zhao, 2024; Zhang & Zou, 2024). Leenknecht et al. (2023) describe motivation as the willingness that drives individuals to engage



in learning and achieve their goals. It is an internal state influenced by external factors and has a profound impact on educational outcomes. Motivation has long been recognized as one of the key factors that determine second language achievement for the learners (Danesh et al., 2020; MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). Motivation serves as the initial engine for stimulating second language learning and later plays a role as a continuous driving force which helps to maintain the long and laborious journey of second language acquisition. Ushioda and Dörnyei (2017) assert that it is fair to say that without sufficient motivation even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language proficiency, whereas most learners with strong motivation can achieve a working knowledge of the L2, regardless of their language aptitude or any undesirable learning conditions.

Gardner and Lambert (1959) proposed the most commonly used framework for understanding the different motivations that language learners typically have. They distinguished two types of language learning motivation: instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. Integrative motivation refers to language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment; that is, the learner likes to learn a language to enter successfully into the target language society so that he/she can communicate with people of another culture or become involved in social interchange in that society. According to Gardner's (1988) distinction, learners with instrumental motivation treat target language as an instrument, hoping that target language can bring about material benefit for them, such as improving their social status and economic income; while learners with integrated motivation appreciate the language they learn and the culture related to the learned language and hope to be accepted by target language society.

Methodology

Participants

Purposive sampling was used for the selection of the participants in this study. Based on this sampling technique, 20 EFL teachers were selected from among 37 English language teachers from different high schools in Shahrood. All the participants were Iranian EFL teachers working at secondary schools where the study was conducted. Among these EFL teachers, 14 had a master's degree in the same field. They all had studied and graduated in Iran as an EFL context and none of them had the experience of living in an ESL context. The group of teachers involved in the study belonged to a variety of age range (32–45 years old and had teaching experience at the secondary school level which ranged from 13 to 25. Sixteen of them were full-time teachers and three were part-time. The students attending this research study were male students who studied English as one of their compulsory subjects at a high school in Shahrood. Purposeful sampling technique was used in this study for the identification and selection of cases. Only high school students in the 12th grade and mainly those who had not joined any other English classes except their regular school classes were allowed to participate in this study.

Instrumentation

To begin with, a questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data in this study. According to Creswell (2012), questionnaires provide quantitative or numeric description of opinions, attitudes, or trends of a population by studying a sample of that population. Questionnaires are a widely used method with numerous advantages. Firstly, questionnaires are convenient for both the researcher and participants. Questionnaires are often self-completing, so the researcher does not have to be present when the participants fill them out (Bryman, 2008). Furthermore, participants can complete the questionnaire in their own time and feel at ease while responding

them. Moreover, questionnaires, as a research instrument, are time efficient as they make it possible for the researcher to get a large number of responses over a short time (Drever, 1995).

Autonomy Questionnaire

Taguchi's Questionnaire on L2 Motivation

The questionnaire was adapted, which is originally based on established questionnaires of Dörnyei (2001) and Gardner (1985). The questionnaire included two main parts: one part measured the background knowledge about the given concept. The items were of statement and question types; a six-point Likert scale was used to measure the former type while a six-point rating scale was used for the latter. The six-point Likert Scale was used in the first section of the questionnaire requiring the statements. In the second section responses were on a Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). The content of this instrument was validated by five experienced EFL instructors. Moreover, the values ranging from 0.809 to 0.834 suggest that the items have a relatively high degree of reliability.

Data Collection procedure

For the purpose of this study, the aim of the questionnaire was obtaining a view of the concept of learner autonomy and its practices as perceived by Iranian teachers. More specifically, a questionnaire on the construct of learner autonomy (LA) in EFL learning was administered to high school English language teachers participating in this study. The questionnaire was used to administer the treatment. Based on the participants' EFL teachers who were totally unaware of the concept of autonomy in EFL learning were selected for the purpose of the present study. Next, the selected participants were randomly divided into two equal groups. One group was assigned to the experimental (treatment) group and the other one was assigned to the control group. The treatment group was requested to attend a workshop which took a minimum of ten hours of instruction (training) on the concept of autonomy, the role it is hoped to play in more efficient learning of English, ways of developing autonomous language learners such as presenting the learning strategies that can enhance EFL learning as well

as the effect that this understanding may have on the FFL teachers' the work shop was run in cooperative manner in which the researcher was not the sole speaker, but after instructing each concept, the participating teachers had the opportunity to be involved in discussion and discuss the possible ways to implement it in their classes and the way they could overcome the potential challenges in its optimal deployment. Upon completing the workshop, the teachers participating in the study were required to use the new skills and learning strategies in FFL learning. After completing the workshop, the teachers were required to fill out the same questionnaire they did before the treatment as the post-test. Next, their scores on the two questionnaires were analyzed to see whether the results of the two questionnaires were significantly different from each other or not so that we could attribute the difference to the positive effect of the workshop. The teachers in the control group, however, served as the standard of comparison and thus received no instruction, or experimental treatment.

Results

Analysis of the First Research Question

The first quantitative research question of this study was as follows:

Does EFL teachers' awareness of autonomy have any significant effect on their teaching practices?

First, the descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups' pre-test scores were used to answer this research question. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the pretest scores.

Table 1

The Descriptive Statistics for the Experimental and the Control Groups' Pretest Scores

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Exp G Pre	10	102	199	301	249.70	35.236	1241.567
Ctl G Pre	10	102	197	299	235.50	30.830	950.500

As can be seen in Table 1, the means for the experimental and control groups' pretest scores are 249.70 and 235.50, respectively. Next, whether the mean difference for pretest scores is statistically significant should be determined. First, the normality of scores should be checked to find an appropriate inferential test for the comparison of means. Here, because of the sample size (< 100), the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was run. The statistics for the normality of pretest scores are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

The Normality Test of the Experimental and Control Groups' Pre-Test Scores

Shapiro-Wilk			
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Exp G Pre	.930	10	.451
Ctl G Pre	.923	10	.380

Table 2, indicates that the sig. values for the experimental and control groups' pretest scores are 0.451 and 0.380, respectively. Here, both of them are more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 (0.451 > 0.05 and 0.380 > 0.05) which means that two sets of scores are normally

distributed. Thus, a parametric test was run for the comparison of means. Since two sets of scores belong to different groups, the researcher utilized the Independent Samples T-test. Now, it should be determined which row of the statistics is appropriate for the interpretation of sig. value. The Levene test of homogeneity of variances was run to specify the appropriate row of sig. value for the interpretation of inferential test results. Table 3, below presents the statistics of homogeneity of variances.

Table 3*The Levene Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Pre-Test Scores*

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.266	1	18	.613

According to Table 3, the sig. value is 0.613 and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.613 > 0.05$) which means that the homogeneity of variances is assumed and the first row of the statistics is appropriate for the interpretation of the significance of means difference. The following eeee~~eeeeee~~ eeiii a sssssss~~c~~ rrr eeeeeeee c eee-test means comparison.

Table 4*The Independent Samples t-Test for the Experimental and Control Groups' Pretests*

Means	t-test for Equality of		t-test for Equality of Means			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95%	Confidence of the Difference	
				Lower		
Pre-Test	.959	18	.350	14.200	14.806	-16.905 45.305

Considering Table 4, the sig. value is 0.350 and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.350 > 0.05$) which means that the observed means difference is not statistically significant. Thus, it can be said that there was not any meaningful difference between these g^{””””} means regarding their pretest scores. To continue with the analysis, it is necessary to check whether the difference between posttest means is statistically significant or not. To do it, first, the descriptive statistics for the experimental and control group^{””””} tttt tttt sceee are eeeee Table 5 below.

Table 5*The Descriptive Statistics for the Experimental and Control Groups' Posttest Scores*

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Exp G Post	10	123	209	332	273.30	38.618	1491.344
Ctl G Post	10	98	198	296	234.30	30.583	935.344

A ca ee eee Taeee aaa rrr eeeeeeee c tttt -test scores are 273.30 and 243.30, respectively. Next, whether the mean difference for posttest scores is statistically significant or not should be determined. First, the normality of scores should be checked to find an appropriate inferential test for mean comparison. Here, because of the sample size (< 100), the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was used. The statistics for the normality of posttest scores are presented in the following table.

Table 6*The Normality Test of the Experimental and Control Groups' Posttest Scores*

Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df
Exp G Post	.980	10
Ctl G Post	.919	10

Table 6, indicates that the sig. values for the both experimental and control posttest scores are 0.965 and 0.352, respectively. Here, both of them are more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 (0.965 > 0.05 and 0.352 > 0.05) which means that the two sets of scores are normally distributed. Thus, the researcher was allowed to run a parametric test for the comparison of means. Since two sets of scores belong to different groups, the Independent Sample T-test was utilized by the researcher. Now, it should be determined which row of the statistics is appropriate for the interpretation of sig. value. The Levene test of homogeneity of variances was run to specify the appropriate row of sig. value for the interpretation of inferential test results. Table 7, below presents the statistics of homogeneity of variances.

Table 7*The Levene Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Posttest Scores*

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.699	1	18	.414

According to Table 7, the sig. value is 0.414 and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 (0.414 > 0.05) which means that the homogeneity of variances is assumed and the first row of the statistics is appropriate for the interpretation of the significance of means difference. The following table presents the inferential statisticooooeeeeee eeee llll aa co''''''''''' -test means comparison.

Table 8*The Independent Samples t-Test for the Experimental and Control Groups' Post-Tests*

Means	t-test for Equality of Means						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
				Lower	Upper		
Post-Test	2.504	18	.022	39.000	15.578	6.272	71.728

Table 8, indicates that the sig. value is 0.022 and it is less than the critical value i.e., 0.05 (0.022 < 0.05) which means that the observed means difference is statistically significant. Thus, it can be said that there was a meaningful difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of autonomy had a significant effect on their teaching practices.

Analysis of the Second Quantitative Research Question

The second quantitative research question of this study was as follows:

What is the relationship between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher's motivation and their teaching practices?

First, the descriptive statistics are used to answer this research question. The following table presents the descriptive statistics of the pretest scores.

Table 9*The Descriptive Statistics for the Experimental and Control Groups' Pretest Scores*

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Exp G Pre	50	205	95	300	201.18	56.645	3208.600
Ctl G Pre	50	208	93	301	207.44	51.563	2658.700

As can be seen in Table 9, the pretest scores are 201.18 and 207.44, respectively. Next, whether the mean difference for pretest scores is statistically significant should be determined. First, the normality of scores should be checked to find an appropriate inferential test for the comparison of means. Here, because of the sample size (< 100), the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was run. The statistics for the normality of pretest scores are presented in Table 10.

Table 10*The Normality Test of the Experimental and Control Groups' Pre-Test Scores*

Shapiro-Wilk			
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Exp G Pre	.965	50	.151
Ctl G Pre	.978	50	.473

The Shapiro-Wilk test statistics for the experimental and control groups' pre-test scores are 0.151 and 0.473, respectively. Here, both of them are more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.151 > 0.05$ and $0.473 > 0.05$) which means that the two sets of scores are normally distributed. Thus, a parametric test was run for the comparison of means. Since two sets of scores belong to different groups, the Independent Sample T-test was utilized by the researcher. Now, it should be determined which row of the statistics is appropriate for the interpretation of sig. value. The Levene test of homogeneity of variances was run to specify the appropriate row of sig. value for the interpretation of inferential test results. Table 11, below presents the statistics of homogeneity of variances.

Table 11*The Levene Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Pretest Scores*

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.629	1	98	.430

According to Table 11, the sig. value is 0.430 and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.430 > 0.05$) which means that the homogeneity of variances is assumed and the first row of the statistics is appropriate for the interpretation of the significance of means difference. The independent samples t-test is used for the comparison of means.

Table 12*The Independent Samples t-Test for the Experimental and Control Groups' Pre-Tests***t-test for Equality of Means**

Means		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Interval Difference	Confidence of the Difference	
	t	df			Lower	Upper	
Pre-Test	-.578	98	.565	-6.260	10.833	-27.757	15.237

Considering Table 12, the sig. value is 0.565 and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.565 > 0.05$) which means that the observed means difference is not statistically significant. Thus, it can be said that there was not any meaningful difference between these two groups means regarding their pretest scores. To continue with the analysis, it is necessary to check whether the difference between posttest means is statistically significant or not. To do it, first, the descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups' posttest scores are presented in Table 13 below.

Table 13*The Descriptive Statistics for the Experimental and Control Groups' Posttest Scores*

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Exp G Post	50	198	111	309	226.90	51.174	2618.786
Ctl G Post	50	200	96	296	203.92	53.024	2811.585

can ee see Ta aaa ss rrr exeeeeee dd c " " " " " ttt -test scores are 226.90 and 203.92, respectively. Next, whether the mean difference for post-test scores is statistically significant or not should be determined. First, the normality of scores should be checked to find an appropriate inferential test for mean comparison. Here, because of the sample size (< 100), the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was used. The statistics for the normality of posttest scores are presented in the following table.

Table 14*The Normality Test of the Experimental and Control Groups' Posttest Scores*

Shapiro-Wilk			
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Exp G Post	.966	50	.154
Ctl G Post	.965	50	.138

Table 14, indicates that the test scores are 0.154 and 0.138, respectively. Here, both of them are more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.154 > 0.05$ and $0.138 > 0.05$) which means that two sets of scores are normally distributed. Thus, the researcher was allowed to run a parametric test for the comparison of means. Since two sets of scores belong to different groups, the Independent Sample T-test was utilized by the researcher. Now, it should be determined which row of the statistics is appropriate for the interpretation of sig. value. The Levene test of homogeneity of variances was run to specify the appropriate row of sig. value for the interpretation of inferential test results. Table 15, below presents the statistics of homogeneity of variances.

Table 15*The Levene Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Post-Test Scores*

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.002	1	98	.961

According to Table 15, the sig. value is 0.961 and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.961 > 0.05$) which means that the homogeneity of variances is assumed and the first row of the statistics is appropriate for the interpretation of the significance of means difference. The following table presents the inferential statistics for the experimentalaa co"","","","" -test means comparison.

Table 16*The Independent Samples t-Test for the Experimental and Control Groups' Posttests*

Means	t-test for Equality of		t-test for Equality of Means			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95%	Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower		
t	df					
Post-Test	2.205	98	.030	22.980	10.421	2.299 43.661

Table 16, indicates that the sig. value is 0.030 and it is less than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.030 < 0.05$) which means that the observed means difference is statistically significant. Thus, it can be said that there was a meaningful difference between the two pppppp eeffaaaa nce regarding their posttest scores. Thus, tt ca ee aa had a siiii ccæeee effecooFFLLeaaeer'tttt tttttttt L aaacee''' eeeeeee eee ammmmmmm

Discussion

ttt eetttt sssssscal aaaiiii aa eeeee ee L aaacee''' aaa reness of autonomy significantly enhanced their autonomous teaching practice level. Therefore, it can be said that EFL teachers' awareness of a construct like autonomy was materialized in the class; knowing something about a construct did not remain theoretical knowledge and was manifested in their class management and instructional strategies. Also, it revealed that EFL teache''' eeeeeee eee o ammmmmminiii iii alll ieeeeeee eeFFL eanrer' tt L aaæhe''' knowledge and the consequent practices stemming from that knowledge can directly affect their EFL learners' awareness and application of autonomous behaviors. In addition, EFL teachers found teaching and learning autonomy as a key element of their teaching process which influenced rrrrrrrrrrr rreeaiittt yaaaæaaaaaaæocaaa cce aiiiii il development.

The second finding was that EFL teachers found autonomous teaching awareness and knowledge as a pivotal factor in developing their EFL learners' motivation, fostering greater engagement in learning, and encouraging active classroom participation. The third finding demonstrated that EFL teachers conceptualized their knowledge of autonomy as a main factor for improving EFL learners' performance in areas such as persistence in learning, generation of meanings, and tolerance of ambiguity in the learning process.

Regarding the first finding of this research, it can be said that awareness of autonomy acts as an important factor fostering qualities such as initiative, creativity, flexibility, and decision-making efficiency among teachers. It seems that these elements explain the significant impact of aaæee''' autonomy awareness on classroom practices. Of course, some research has demonstrated similar outcomes which are in line with the findings of the present study:



autonomy awareness enhances creativity (Basri, 2023), increases teaching flexibility (Zhang et al., 2022), optimizes teaching performance (Amini & Kruger, 2022), and improves job satisfaction and performance quality (Bai & Gu, 2022; Xia et al., 2022). Furthermore, studies by Cheon et al. (2020) and Knight (2019) corroborate the finding that teachers' autonomy contributes to improved teaching performance.

Regarding the second finding of the current research, the positive effect of autonomy can be attributed to the inherent nature of autonomy. The sense of freedom and choice provided by autonomy can encourage activities with enthusiasm and creativity, inspiring students to engage more actively. Recent studies confirm that autonomy awareness in fostering motivation (Bureau et al., 2022; Lin & Reinders, 2019; Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Smaller classes and a supportive environment bolster confidence and perseverance, leading to higher levels of motivation and effort.

Conclusion

In recent years, the concept of autonomous language learning has gained significant attention from educators, researchers, and policymakers (Tran & Moskovsky, 2022). This study emphasizes how important it is for EFL teachers to understand and support learner autonomy. When teachers are aware of this concept, they can create a more effective and inclusive learning environment where students feel motivated, engaged, and capable of learning independently.

Autonomy is developed through collaboration and shared experiences with others. Teachers who work together in supportive communities can better promote equal opportunities, share knowledge, and encourage autonomous learning. Autonomy is also an essential part of being a professional teacher, as it strengthens the value and quality of their work (Torbergson et al., 2023). Teachers who support autonomy help students by understanding their needs, encouraging their ideas, giving them choices, and building their confidence. These teachers also help students understand the purpose of their learning, ask questions, and find their own way to succeed (Okada, 2023; Orakci & Durnali, 2023).

Supporting autonomy in teaching means helping students find personal meaning in what they are learning, encouraging them to make choices, and fostering their internal motivation. Teachers can also help students feel more confident by creating a learning environment where collaboration and teamwork are encouraged. These strategies enable students to learn more deeply and effectively (Paulmann & Weinstein, 2023; Dubois et al., 2023).

One of the most important factors in successful English language teaching is how well teachers understand the strategies that promote autonomy. Studies have shown that teachers who understand the importance of autonomy are more effective in their teaching (Amini & Kruger, 2022; Stockwell & Reinders, 2019). Teachers who promote autonomous learning help students become more motivated and self-directed, leading to better learning outcomes (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). When students feel more independent, they experience a sense of freedom and security, which encourages them to participate in the learning process with greater enthusiasm and motivation (Teng, 2019).

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