

Indonesian ELT Teachers' Beliefs toward Language Learner Autonomy

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Abstract—This present study aims at investigating Indonesian EFL teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy. A questionnaire about 36 English teachers' perception towards learner autonomy was used to collect data. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis by utilizing the SPSS. The study reveals that the majority of Indonesian ELT teachers defined learner autonomy as learners' responsibility for taking care of his own learning independently with less support of the teacher and making decisions about how they learn in which the teacher played a major role in promoting and developing learner autonomy. Furthermore, most teachers confirmed that their students are able to be autonomous and are quite sure that they will succeed in promoting learner autonomy. However, learner autonomy is important in EFL learning, but there are some constraints that teachers face and need to overcome. The study underlines the importance of teachers taking a professional training workshop, in order to help them to get more information and improve their knowledge of learner autonomy.

Keywords—digital era; EFL; learner autonomy; teachers' role in learner autonomy

I. INTRODUCTION

Generally, we can still find that teaching and learning English in Indonesia are not intuitively autonomous. In classroom activities, students to overly rely on their teachers [1]. The teacher gives intervention hugely in learning activities. While the learner takes parts passively. In this situation, the learners do not have opportunities to develop their learning ability. Consequently, they felt that learning is not meaningful for them. However, creating and maintaining the learning environment in which learner can be autonomous is the teacher's role. It is supported by Çakici [2] and Nga [3], they argued that teachers have responsibility in supporting learners to learn independently and responsible for developing a conducive learning environment to promoting learner autonomy. In short, learner autonomy is a very decisive idea because it gives more opportunities for the students to be independent in learning.

Learner autonomy is widely defined as the ability of the learner to take charges of one's own learning. In this case, it can be pointed out that to take charge of one's learning means to have the responsibility for all decisions regarding to all aspects of this learning. Learning itself will be possible when

the learner taking charge. In another word, taking charge of one's own learning is a prerequisite of learning [4]. From this statement, it can be said that promoting learner autonomy is highly needed to reassure the idea of autonomy in language classrooms. Having autonomy in language learning, learners have the power and right to learn for themselves [5]. It can be said that learning will be more meaningful and fruitful for them. They make their own decision in determining the learning objective. Consequently, they will be more focus on learning a language.

Learner autonomy is not a new topic in English Foreign Language. Many researchers reported that learner autonomy should be inculcated among learners [4,6-9]. Learner autonomy has given an idea where the learners can direct their own learning. In this scenario, they can set the activities and goals by following learning strategies that have been chosen. In addition, there is no intervention of the teacher in learning activities. In other words, the teacher plays a role as a facilitator. Çakici stresses that teachers should be aware to involve his/her students in autonomous learning. The essential point is a teacher must make a shift in his/her role as a dispenser of knowledge to be a supplier of knowledge. In fact, most teachers seemed not really aware of it even they did not realize. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a research on learner autonomy [2].

Even though learner autonomy is not a new topic in language learning research, it is still a new research area and rarely discussed in any educational levels in Indonesia. With reference to Indonesian context, there are still limited studies exploring learners' autonomy in Indonesia, particularly investigating teachers' beliefs regarding learner autonomy. Mostly, they focused on students' perception on learner autonomy [10-14]. Therefore, the present study is going to explore Indonesian EFL teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy and constraints that teacher faces in promoting learner autonomy. This present study is hoped to give the contribution to understanding teachers' belief about learner autonomy. It is also hoped to give contribution in formulating future interventions in developing learner autonomy and providing Indonesia English teachers new insights into learner autonomy.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Concept of Learner Autonomy*

Learner autonomy firstly introduced by Henri Holec in the 1980s [15]. He describes learner autonomy as the ability of the learners to take charge of one's own learning. It covers taking responsibility for determining the learning objectives, defining the content and progression, selecting methods and technique to be used, and evaluating what has been acquired. However, Benson defines autonomy as the capacity to take control of one's own learning [16]. Essentially, in philosophy and psychology, autonomy has come to be associated with the capacity of the individual to act as a responsible member of society since learner cannot be free because of others.

Actually, the main idea of learner autonomy is that learners should take responsibility of their own learning, rather than be dependent on the teacher [15]. Autonomous learners construct their knowledge from direct experience, rather than respond to someone's instruction [16]. In addition, learner autonomy provides learners with the ability to take on responsibility for their own learning. The learner may make decisions about what and how they should learn by themselves.

This matters are suitable with the teaching practice today. Learning in the 21st century, there is a gradual shift of typical classroom context. Learners are demanded to be active and self-directed. The teaching and learning process is expected to support students on how to learn by finding knowledge and information themselves. More specifically, the learning processes motivate students to actively participate in the classroom, work collaboratively, discipline, and responsible with.

Although learner autonomy is very promising to make the learner learning independently, a number of the obstacle can still find in implementing learner autonomy, especially in a classroom setting. Lengkanawati reported that there were some barriers which make learner autonomy difficult to be developed among Indonesian learners such as limited time allotted for the implementation of the curriculum, learners' lack of autonomous learning experience, too much focus on national examinations, and insufficient proficiency of English [8].

The similar reports come from Borg and Al Busaidi [7], Keuk and Heng [17], Haji-Othman and Wood [18], Tapinta [19]. They stated that the greatest problems come from the learner's side. Most of them do not understand the importance of developing learner autonomy, lack the skill to learn independently, and are not accustomed to being asked to take responsibility for their learning. In general, they are accustomed to a spoon-feeding teaching style. Meanwhile, from the teacher side includes their own lack of autonomy and their need to follow to the advocate curriculum, syllabus, and materials. Institutional factors include lack of resources and time for promoting learner autonomy.

In addition, as the need to be an autonomous learner is inevitable in the global competition, the teacher should consider the strategies to promote autonomous learning not merely as strategies for teaching but as the mean to get the real meaning of learning [20]. In line with Lengkanawati, she

suggests that teacher should teach learners learn how to learn using learning strategies. It is unavoidable that we make them become autonomous which in turn will help them have better learning outcomes [21].

B. *Teachers' Belief about Learner Autonomy*

A number of researchers have been conducted a research regarding teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy. Borg and Al-Busaidi used a questionnaire to explore 61 teachers' learner autonomy beliefs and practices at a university in Oman. The research findings are teachers held favorable theoretical views about the importance of learner autonomy in second language learning. However, in teachers' actual practices they were less confident about their learners' autonomy [7]. Lengkanawati [9] and Alrabai report on their research that the teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy were categorized into technical, psychological, political, and sociocultural perspective [22]. In addition to, Lengkanawati, reports that most teachers in Indonesia desired to implement learner autonomy principles in their teaching-learning context [8]. Meanwhile, Alrabai confirms that teachers in Iran emphasized that they were responsible for their students' learning, and they perceived their students as passive, dependent and lacking initiative [22].

Furthermore, Keuk and Heng, conducted a research on teachers' belief and practices regarding language learner Autonomy in Cambodia. The study revealed that the majority of Cambodian ELT teachers conceptualized learners' ability to make decisions about, and take responsibility for their learning. Teachers were perceived to play a vital role in promoting learning autonomy within the classroom. In this study, most teachers reported their active practices of learner autonomy in the classroom [17].

As reviewed above, the research results confirmed that English language teachers believed learner autonomy is important to be promoted in the classroom practice, they were responsible for their students' learning and have desired to implement learner autonomy principles in their teaching practice. In addition, ELT teachers also believe that teachers play a crucial role in promoting learning autonomy and conceptualized learner autonomy as the learner' ability to make a decision and take responsibility for their learning.

III. METHOD

The current study aims at identifying the teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy, teachers' beliefs about students' abilities to be autonomous, and the constraints that teachers face in promoting learner autonomy. More specifically, the study investigated the following questions: 1) what learner autonomy means to Indonesian English language teachers, 2) to what extent teachers feel their learners are autonomous, and 3) what challenges teachers face in helping their learners become autonomous.

For this study, English teachers who teach in senior high school and university in Indonesia were invited to participate in this survey. Participating teachers represented a wide range of gender, years of experience in teaching, and qualification. Data were collected from the questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed from Borg and Albusaidi [7]. The questionnaire was

distributed to 60 English teachers through Google form. It was used because it is easy and quick to collect the data on the survey, and we can also watch responses appear in real time. A total of 36 (7 males and 29 females) respondents from the regions of West Sumatera, North Sumatera, West Java, East Java, and Borneo completed the questionnaires. The participants were asked to respond to the survey within two weeks. A descriptive statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS to report the result of the survey.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the research questions are briefly reported below. The results of the study are presented based on the research question that is addressing to this study. Table 1 shows the result of survey respondents.

TABLE I. BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Gender	Female	80.6 %
	Male	19.4 %
Years of experience in teaching	0-4 years	36.1 %
	5-9 years	33.3 %
	10-14 years	30.6 %
Teacher certification	Yes	44.4 %
	No	55.6 %
Highest qualification	S1 degree	52.8%
	S2 degree	47.2 %

A. Defining Learner Autonomy

The first research question dealing with the teachers' understanding of the meaning of learner autonomy. In the questionnaire responses, 42.9% of teachers viewed learner autonomy is a situation in which learners are totally responsible for their learning; 41.7 % of teachers defined autonomy is learners can make choices about how they learn; and 55.6 % of the teachers acknowledged the important role played by teachers in promoting and developing learner autonomy.

The majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that learner autonomy could be developed through independent study in the library (55.6 %), learning outside the classroom (55.0%), out-of-class activities that require learners to use the internet (62.9 %). However, the majority of the teachers (33.3%) unsure when addressed by a statement that learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher. It is interesting to note that a majority of teachers did not believe that learner autonomy meant learning without a teacher.

Results also indicated that the majority of teachers (30.6 %) strongly agreed or agreed that learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centered classrooms. 50% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes their autonomy. 61.1% and 44.4% of teachers also believed that learner autonomy is promoted when the learner can choose their own learning material and when learners have some choices in the kinds of activities they do. From these answer, it can be concluded that the learner centered approach are appropriate to use to develop students' autonomy.

Interestingly, 52.8% of teachers agreed that learner autonomy is promoted through activities that give learners opportunities to learn from one another; 44.4 % of the teachers' majority believed that learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together; and 50 % of teachers they also believed that co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy. It is interesting to note that work collaboratively can be one of the effective ways to promote learner autonomy.

It is also indicated 50% of teachers thought that learning how to learn is the key on developing learning autonomy and the ability to monitor one's learning. It is also central to learner autonomy. Then, the majority of teachers agree that learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be evaluated (63.9%). From this data, it is proved that a vast group of teachers believes that students' ability to monitor their learning is important in developing learner autonomy.

B. Teachers' Beliefs about Students' Abilities to be Autonomous

Regarding to the second research question, most teachers believed that their learners are autonomous. It was found that the majority of teachers responding positively to the statements. 36.1% of teachers believed that their students are able to learn independently. Moreover, 61.1% of teachers also believed that their students are able to learn cooperatively. Teachers also reported that 41.7% of their students are able to identify both their weaknesses and strengths. However, many teachers were not sure or undecided to evaluate their student's ability to evaluate their learning (33.3%), to monitor their progress (38.9%), and to identify their needs (36.1%). Similarly, 44.4% of teachers were not sure that their students are able to decide the objectives for each lesson, and 38.9% of teachers were also not sure that their students are able to choose the learning activities for each lesson, to evaluate their study outcomes for each lesson, and to be involved in deciding the teaching methods used in each lesson. Surprisingly, Most of the teachers (44.4%) though that students are able to choose the learning materials for each lesson, and 41.7% of their students are able to be involved in classroom management.

C. The Obstacle in Promoting Learner Autonomy

Concerning to the constraints in promoting learner autonomy, it was informed that most of the learners lack the experience on learner autonomy, they are dependent on their teachers, and act as knowledge recipients, so it affects their mindset in learning. Therefore, as a suggestion, it's recommended for teachers to train the students to become autonomous step by step by considering students' prior knowledge and cognitive-socio background in order to lead them to be ready for becoming autonomous learners. Limited English proficiency and lack of confidence and motivation to learn English are also the major obstacles in promoting learner autonomy. In addition, some of the teachers reported that social, economic and cultural background are also the constraints to promote and develop learner autonomy.

Meanwhile, the teacher's factor includes their own lack of autonomy, the old method of teaching that commonly use in the learning process, the teacher's style as the center of information and knowledge. Teachers commonly have the desire to develop learner autonomy but they are still not ready since they have limited knowledge on learner autonomy. They also informed that they need a special training or workshop in order to add some knowledge about autonomous teaching and learning. Of course, it is related to a lack of support from institutional. Lack of attention from the institution can be a major obstacle when implementing learner autonomy.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study aims at exploring Indonesian ELT teachers' belief towards language learner autonomy. The study reveals that the majority of Indonesian ELT teachers define learner autonomy as learners' responsibility to take care of his own learning. The learners can learn independently with less support of the teacher, and have the ability in making decisions about how they learn. They also inform that in promoting and developing learner autonomy teachers play a major role. Furthermore, most teachers confirm that their learner able to be autonomous and quite sure that they will succeed in promoting learner autonomy. In addition, several factors were identified as obstacles in promoting and developing learner autonomy, i.e. learners are still dependent on their teacher, teachers lack of knowledge about autonomy, and limited training given.

The study provides some recommendations. In facing digital era, there is a need for the teacher to focus on getting students to be an autonomous and independent learner. In real condition, teachers have limited knowledge to implement learner autonomy. To have positive attitude in implementing learner autonomy, a training to ensure teachers' readiness must be given. For this reason, it is important for the institution to provide teachers with the professional development program. It is time to plan a training program in the form of workshop or seminar on learner autonomy. Following, this professional program will help teacher update and upgrade knowledge and build their awareness of learner autonomy.

For further research, perhaps similar studies could be carried out in a larger scale in order to have a wide view on learner autonomy. One limitation of the present study is it did not investigate the actual teaching practice of the teacher. It is necessary to conduct research about teachers' beliefs and their actual teaching practice.

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