

Assessing undergraduate students' level of independent learning as a manifestation of learner autonomy

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Abstract

Previous studies related to learner autonomy have been conducted, yet those studies seem to focus on formative assessment as a guarantee for the development of learner autonomy. This study is projected to assess the undergraduate students' level of independent learning since learner autonomy tends to manifest itself in various degree of independence. A questionnaire related to independent learner was adopted as the main instrument. The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data were obtained to assess the students' level of independent learning while the qualitative data were gained to reveal the students' perceptions and thoughts about independent learning. The results show that most of the students have moderate independence. Moreover, most of the students are considered able to relate the concept of independent learning with various degrees of independence that are included in the notion of learner autonomy. Nevertheless, the findings also show that some students tend to have low interest in their studies, low expectation about what they want to learn, and low possibility in questioning what they are told. It is important for the teachers to enhance the students' moderate independence into high independence by providing the access to a number of learning opportunities. Thus, the students are able to critically reflect on their own learning and effectively develop awareness to help them learn constructively.

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INTRODUCTION

An interest related to learner autonomy has been growing in the past few years dealing with the students' ability to develop and practice their own knowledge and skill either in language learning or other subjects of learning (Knowles, 1975; Wenden, 1987; Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Candy, 1991; Littlewood, 1996; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Cavana, 2011; Nematipour, 2012). The early notion of learner autonomy was introduced as self-directed learning (Knowles, 1975). The self-directed learning is defined as a process for individuals to take their own initiatives either with or without the assistance of others. It visualizes the teachers as a facilitator and procedural guide rather than a teacher and content transmitter (Knowles, 1975). Thus, as individuals, the students are supposed to diagnose learning needs, formulate learning purposes, identify material and human resources for learning, choose and employ a proper learning strategy, and evaluate their learning outcomes (Cavana, 2011). Although some negative comments appear by stating that self-directed learning is considered as a propaganda rather than a scholarly work (Long, 2015), yet it provides both a primary reference to be a self-directed learner and an essential means for the practice of adult education.

The concept of self-directed learning evolves as independent learning and critical thinking (Cavana, 2011) portraying the capability of individuals to take charge of their own learning (Holec, 1981). It also develops as learner autonomy (Nematipour, 2012) describing the individuals'

willingness and capability to make judgments (Littlewood, 1996), objectivity, critical reflection, and independent actions (Little, 1991) partially through educational experiences and interventions (Candy, 1991). The idea of learner autonomy indicates the fact that the process of learning may progress and develop properly if the students, as individuals, take responsibility to actively determine and construct their own learning.

The terms self-directed learning, learner autonomy, independent learning, and autonomous learning are found to be quite complex. Benson & Voller (1997) argue that self-directed learning is the students' global ability to accomplish the learning while autonomous learning is the students' personal characteristic to associate with such an ability. On the other hand, independent learning is perceived as the synonym of individualization (Joshi, 2011). Moreover, terms such as self-instruction, self-study, self-education, and out-of-class learning (Benson, 2011) are considered as the degrees of learning while autonomy is referred to the abilities (Joshi, 2011). In a nutshell, it can be inferred that autonomy is a complex socio-cognitive system manifesting itself in various degrees of independence and the students' own learning process (Joshi, 2011). The ideas of capabilities, attitude, willingness, decision-making, planning, and actions are involved in the notion of autonomy.

In the foreign language learning discipline, the term autonomous learning has been discussed resulting to the narrow and broad perspectives of autonomous learning. According to the narrow perspective of autonomous learning, the students are supposed to make decisions, recognize learning potential, able to take responsibility, develop self-discipline and self-control as well as have self-confidence in learning the target languages. On the other hand, based on the broad perspective of autonomous learning, the students are expected to be critical and logical in selecting important tools and resources to control their own learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). That is to say, the narrow perspective of autonomous learning enables the students to learn how to learn while the broad perspective of autonomous learning enables the students to learn how to be liberated learners.

There are four major aspects of autonomous learning in foreign language learning, namely self-instruction, self-access learning, self-direction, and individualized instruction (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Self-instruction refers to the students' capability to work on the language tasks with less direct control from the teachers. Self-access learning defines the students' ability to obtain and examine language learning references. Self-direction refers to the students' responsibility in selecting and implementing proper language learning activities. Individualized instruction describes the proper learning process for each individual character of the students (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Furthermore, Hughes (2003) suggests eight essential characteristics of learner autonomy; (1) self-awareness and reflection, (2) intrinsically motivated, (3) plan and control own learning, (4) institutional awareness, understanding requirements and procedures, (5) formulate own questions, (6) interdependence, (7) critical thinking, (8) discipline and subject awareness. The learner autonomy emphasizes the urgency for the students to believe in their own potential and to construct their own learning (Wenden, 1987). In other words, the learner autonomy also concerns with the students' capacity to carry out independent learning.

The interest of independent learners leads to a number of studies that have been carried out to reveal the beneficial factors of learner autonomy in assisting the students to take their own study approach independently and carry out critical thinking (Najeeb, 2012; Lin & Reinders, 2017; Carnell, 2015; Puspasari & Hudayani, 2018). Those studies portray the fact that it is important to not only develop the students' learner autonomy but also equip and exercise their independence and critical thinking; thus, they are able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their own learning and engage with better study approaches.

Besides carrying out independent learning, it is also important for the students to conduct critical reflection on their language learning. Ridley (2003) proposes two forms of critical reflection, namely metalinguistic and metacognitive skills. The metalinguistic skill concerns with the control over target language structures. Meanwhile, the metacognitive skill concerns with the process of assessing their learning (Ridley, 2003). Wenden (1987) also points out the role of critical reflection by introducing self-deconditioning. It mainly refers to the process of re-examining the students' capabilities and methods in learning a language (Wenden, 1987).

A number of studies related to critical reflection on students' learner autonomy have been conducted previously by Canava (2011), Razeq (2014), Carnell (2015), Zhou (2017), Lin & Reinders (2017), Mesiridze & Tvaltchrelidze (2017), Mardjuki (2018), and Puspasari & Hudayani (2018). Those previous studies display the importance of carrying critical reflection on learner autonomy to acknowledge the students' capability in reflecting their learning, developing their understanding, making decision, and improving their problem-solving skill. Therefore, the students' ability to develop and manage their own learning can be assessed with clarity.

Although most of previous studies are obtained qualitatively through self-assessment, portfolios, and interviews, it is noteworthy to state that critical reflection on learner autonomy is also possible to be conducted quantitatively. Numerous scales to assess learner autonomy have also been established such as Self-directed Learning Readiness Scale by Guglielmino (1997), the Oddi continuing learning inventory by Oddi (1986), General Causality Orientations Scale by Deci & Ryan (1985), six factors underlying autonomy by Cotterall (1995), 50-item measurement of autonomy by Dixon (2011), and 113-item on confirmatory factor analysis by Murase (2015). Those scales are designed to assess the students' learner autonomy; thus, several aspects of independent learning can be reflected critically corresponding to the students' needs. In addition, those scales are the evidence that critical reflection on learner autonomy can be carried out quantitatively to provide wider generalizations (Lin & Reinders, 2017).

Moreover, even though some previous studies on learner autonomy are focused on peer assessment (Carnell, 2015; Mesiridze & Tvaltchrelidze, 2017; Puspasari & Hudayani, 2018), it is noteworthy to state that critical reflection on learner autonomy can also be carried out through self-assessment. In other words, self-assessment also provides some usefulness in assessing the learner autonomy. Self-assessment may assist the students to understand learning process, develop learning process, set learning goals, foster self-confidence, and acquire metacognitive knowledge (Canava, 2011). That is to say, self-assessment may provide constructive comments and feedbacks for the students in conducting critical reflection on learner autonomy.

Furthermore, a few studies on learner autonomy tend to deal with formative assessment to carry out critical reflection (Carnell, 2015; Zhou, 2017; Mesiridze & Tvaltchrelidze, 2017). The formative assessment is believed to be able to aid both the teachers and students in focusing on sustainable language learning (Zhou, 2017). The formative assessment may also become the essential key for the students to be critical and autonomous thinkers (Carnell, 2015). As a result, it is considered important to conduct formative assessment as the critical reflection and guarantee for the development of learner autonomy in language learning.

However, learner autonomy concerns with not only the students' outcomes but also the students' ability to carry out independent learning. It means the students need to have the capability to critically monitor and reflect how and what they want to learn (Allan, 2010). Hence, it is also considered important to carry out critical reflection on how the students develop awareness to help them learn effectively, demonstrate a more questioning attitude, and actively discuss and debate their ideas. In other word, it is necessary to assess the students' independent learning especially their capability in identifying and thinking about their approach in language learning.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to evaluate the students' level of independent learning as a manifestation of learner autonomy. The questionnaire called Developing Yourself as an Independent Learner (Allan, 2010) was adopted as the main instrument. The primary instrument involved three major aspects, namely motivation, managing your learning, and reflection employed to carry out self-assessment and critical reflection on the students' capability in monitoring and reflecting how and what they want to learn in a language learning. In specific, the research questions are spelled out as follows:

1. What is the students' level of independent learning?
2. What are the students' thoughts and perceptions towards independent learning?

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used in this research. The quantitative analysis was employed to reveal the students' level of independent learning while the qualitative analysis was used to recognize the students' thoughts and perception towards independent learning. Therefore, the students' level of independent learning can be revealed through the process of self-

assessment on the students' capability in monitoring and reflecting how and what they want to learn in language learning. The reflection also leads to the revelation on the students' thoughts and perceptions towards the definition of independent learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

Type of the Research

The current research used the convergent parallel mixed-method design (Creswell, 2014) to examine the students' level of independent learning as well as their perceptions towards independent learning. The researcher collected quantitative and qualitative data, analysed them individually, and then compared the findings to determine if they corroborate or contradict each other. The basic premise is that qualitative and quantitative data gave distinct sorts of information and, when combined, should provide the same outcomes. The side-by-side technique was used to compare two sets of findings within the results and discussion section, first presenting one set of findings and then the other. The first set of finding was related to the students' level of independent learning divided into three levels; low independence, moderate independence, and high independence. The second set of finding was related to the thoughts and perceptions of the students towards independent learning.

Participants of the Study

The respondents of the present study were 82 undergraduate students taking part in the English for Study Skills Development (ESSD) course at one university in Yogyakarta. The respondents were obtained using random sampling. They consisted of 21 male students (25%) and 61 female students (72.6%).

Instruments of the Study

The present study employed an adopted questionnaire from Allan (2010) to help the students identify their approach to language learning. The instrument was called Developing Yourself as an Independent Learner. This instrument comprised two sections. The first section was the Introduction. It involved two close-ended questions and 1 open-ended question to acknowledge the students' understanding related to independent learning. The second section consisted of three parts: Motivation, Managing Your Learning, Reflection. All items of the second section were described in the form of questions and formed as 4-point scale: 1 – never, 2 – sometimes, 3 – often, 4 – always.

Data collection technique

The present study employed a questionnaire proposed by Allan (2010) called Developing Yourself as an Independent Learner to collect the data. To determine the validity of the questionnaire, each item was tested with Pearson Correlation using SPSS 22. As displayed in table 1, the Pearson correlation coefficient of each item was statistically significant ($p = 0.005$). Thus, each item was considered valid.

Moreover, the Cronbach's Alpha was also used to determine the reliability of the instrument. As can be seen in table 2, the Cronbach's alpha was 0.733 indicating a high level of internal consistency. Hence, the instrument can be considered reliable. The table of interpreting criteria (Allan, 2010) was also used to indicate the undergraduate students' level of independent learning as displayed in table 3.

The questionnaire was used to not only obtain the quantitative but also the qualitative data. The quantitative data focused on the students' level of independent learning that was divided into three levels; low independence, moderate independence, and high independence. Meanwhile, the quantitative data mainly addressed the thoughts and perception of the students pertinent to independent learning.

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Test

Section	No	Items	Pearson Correlation
Section 1: Motivation	1	How interested are you in your studies?	0.329
	2	How keen are you to succeed in your studies?	0.290
	3	How keen are you to become a better learner?	0.187
Section 2: Managing Your Learning	4	Before a class/workshop/study session, are you clear about what you hope to learn?	0.295
	5	Do you plan how and when you are going to learn something?	0.151
	6	Do you ask for help if you are having difficulty learning something new?	0.292
	7	If you come across new study methods do you try them?	0.301
	8	Do you question what you are told e.g. by tutors, in books?	0.277
Section 3: Reflection	9	When you have finished learning about something do you think back about how effective your learning process was?	0.455
	10	Do you change the way you go about learning new things as a result of thinking about past learning situations?	1

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Test

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.733	.718	10

Table 3. Interpreting Criteria for the Level of Independent Learning

Section	Low Independence	Moderate Independence	High Independence
Section 1: Motivation	3 4 5	6 7 8 9	10 11 12
Section 2: Managing Your Learning	4 5 6 7	8 9 10 11 12	13 14 15 16
Section 3: Reflection	3 4 5	6 7 8 9	10 11 12
Final Score	10-19	20-30	31-40

Data Analysis Technique

The data of the present study were separated into two categories: quantitative and qualitative. For the quantitative data analysis, the data gathered from the students in completing the questionnaire were used to carry out descriptive analysis. The descriptive statistics analysis was utilized to determine the total score, mean, and standard deviation (Creswell, 2014) using SPSS Statistics 22. The descriptive analysis was employed to reveal the students' level of independent learning. Meanwhile, for the qualitative data analysis, the students' answers on the questionnaire were gathered and discussed to reveal their thoughts and perceptions towards the definition of independent learning.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Students' level of independent learning

Pertinent to the first element discussed in the present article, section 1 of the questionnaire indicates the students' underlying motivation towards their studies.

Table 4. Results of Section 1 Motivation

Section	No	Items	N	Mean	SD
Section 1: Motivation	1	How interested are you in your studies?	82	3.30	.679
	2	How keen are you to succeed in your studies?	82	3.68	.494
	3	How keen are you to become a better learner?	82	3.63	.578

As portrayed in Table 4, item number two ($M = 3.68$) displays the students' eagerness to succeed in their studies. In addition, item number three ($M = 3.63$) also shows the students' enthusiasm to become a better learner in their studies. These findings correspond with Zhou (2017) who asserts that, through the assessment on learner autonomy, it is revealed that the students may succeed in their studies and become better students. According to Zhou (2017), the students tend to use the constructive criticism and feedbacks to assist them in participating in the learning process and to enhance their learning performance. In addition, by providing critical reflection and assessment on learner autonomy, the students seem to gradually develop their learner autonomy. In other words, the respondents in the previous study tend to have the considerable interest and immense enthusiasm to develop their autonomous learning towards their studies. It contradicts with the finding in the present study. Even though the students display high determination to succeed and become better learners in language learning, on the contrary, item number 1 ($M = 3.30$) reveals that their interest in their studies is lower than their determination and enthusiasm. That is to say, their interest in the study seems lower than their determination to succeed in their studies and become a better learner. The students' considerably low interest in their study may affect their motivation to enhance their learning performance and to develop their learner autonomy, since intrinsically motivated is one of the essential characteristics of learner autonomy (Hughes, 2003).

Table 5. Results of Section 2 Managing Your Learning

Section	No	Items	N	Mean	SD
Section 2: Managing Your Learning	4	Before a class/workshop/study session, are you clear about what you hope to learn?	82	2.28	.725
	5	Do you plan how and when you are going to learn something?	82	2.35	.709
	6	Do you ask for help if you are having difficulty learning something new?	82	3.21	.733
	7	If you come across new study methods, do you try them?	82	2.80	.793

Section 2 of the questionnaire demonstrates the students' effort in managing their learning. It can be seen from Table 5 that item number six has the highest mean ($M = 3.21$). It shows the fact that the students tend to ask for help if they are having difficulty learning something new. Meanwhile, item number 7 indicates that the students are likely to try new study methods. Moreover, the students are also likely to plan how and when they are going to learn something ($M = 2.35$). These findings are in line with Cavana (2011) who asserts that, through critical reflection on learner autonomy, it is disclosed that the students are able to identify and affirm their preferred study methods. In addition, the students are able to recognize their self-knowledge (Cavana, 2011) to develop their motivation in learning. Thus, the students are likely to have the awareness of their own study approach and the logical basis to plan their studies.

However, as portrayed in Table 5, item number 4 has the lowest mean ($M = 2.28$). That is to say, it can be argued that the students seem to have low expectation about what they hope to learn before the language learning session. This finding seems to correspond with Puspasari & Hudayani (2018) who declare that the respondents in their study tend to have low expectation in what they hope to learn. It is due to the fact that they have low awareness in thinking and finding references for their study because of several reasons, such as limited time and limited internet connection. The ability to find and obtain references is one of the characteristics of learner autonomy in language learning that is self-access learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). One of the reasons for the students to be unclear

about what they want to learn is, perhaps, because they have low self-access learning skill to find references for their study; thus, they do not have any expectations about what they hope to learn.

Table 6. Results of Section 3 Reflection

Section	No	Items	N	Mean	SD
Section 3: Reflection	8	Do you question what you are told e.g. by tutors, in books?	82	2.68	.735
	9	When you have finished learning about something do you think back about how effective your learning process was?	82	2.76	.730
	10	Do you change the way you go about learning new things as a result of thinking about past learning situations?	82	3.17	.814

Section 3 of the questionnaire portrays the students' reflection towards their learning approach. As displayed in Table 6, item number ten has the highest mean ($M = 3.17$). It means that the students tend to change the way they go about learning new things as a result of thinking about past learning situations. In addition, item number 9 ($M = 2.76$) demonstrates the fact that the students are likely to think back about how effective their learning process was. These findings correspond with Cavana (2011) who states that, through critical reflection on learner autonomy, it is revealed that the students are able to take the opportunities and initiative to engage with different study approach. Similarly, Puspasari & Hudayani (2018) assert that the respondents in their study are able to notice better study approaches by understanding the strengths and weaknesses of their own learning. They also have the motivation to learn new study approach. Hence, the students may have the self-confidence and motivation to change and choose their personal study approach.

However, as seen in Table 6, item number eight has the lowest mean ($M = 2.68$) indicating the fact that the students seem to have low possibility in questioning what they are told. This finding seems to not in line with the one of the characteristics of learner autonomy suggested by Hughes (2003) that is *critical thinking*. The learner autonomy concerns with the students' abilities to believe in their potential and to construct their own learning (Wenden, 1987). It means that the students are expected to have the capability in formulating own questions (Hughes, 2003) to enhance their metalinguistic and metacognitive skills (Ridley, 2003). Furthermore, the students with learner autonomy should not be uneasy to ask questions and assistance (Najeeb, 2012) to succeed their learning. In other words, it seems like the respondents in this study tend to have low critical reflection in language learning even though they are able to notice and engage with better study approaches.

Table 7. Students' Level of Independent Learning

Levels of Independent Learning	Frequency	Percentage
Low Independence (10-19)	2	2.4%
Moderate Independence (20-30)	46	56.09%
High Independence (31-40)	34	41.46%

According to Table 7, it is noteworthy to report that 2.4% of the respondents (2 students) have *low independence*. Moreover, 56.09% of the respondents (46 students) have *moderate independence* while 41.46% of the respondents (34 students) have *high independence*. It can be seen that most of the undergraduate students have *moderate independence*. According to Allan (2010), the students who have low and moderate independence need to increase their level of independence by discussing this matter with their peers or tutors. The tutors, especially, need to support the

students' learning by providing the access to a number of learning opportunities and providing several opportunities for the students to have purposeful and meaningful learning engagement.

Moreover, since the respondents in this study are categorized as *moderate* independent learners, it is considered important for them to enhance their learner autonomy into *high independence*. Allan (2010) emphasizes the role of teachers or tutors to lead the students in obtaining more empowered state in carrying out independent learning. This purpose can be fulfilled through several activities; (1) initiate a supervisory relationship through student-initiated question asking; (2) encourage the students to focus on and develop the skills they have obtained; (3) introduce the students to a wider network during their learning journey; (4) create activities to assist the students in giving more impacts to the environment; (5) prioritize the students' uniqueness during their learning journey; (6) be mindful of the language that is appropriately used for the students; (7) positively encourage the students to participate in conversations; (8) provide time to discuss any thoughts and alternative ideas (Lidster & Wakefield, 2018). The proposed activities can be employed to enhance the respondents' independent learning in the process of language learning. Hence, it is possible for the undergraduate students to not only enhance their learner autonomy in language learning but also develop their critical thinking to construct their own learning in any subjects.

Students' Perception and Thoughts about Independent Learning

In terms of the undergraduate students' perception and thoughts about independent learning, it is revealed that some of the students define independent learning as a learning strategy that can be carried out anywhere and anytime as illustrated in Table 8. In other words, some of the respondents tend to perceive independent learning as the capacity to *learn beyond the classroom* (Benson & Reinders, 2011). This finding is in line with the previous study conducted by Joshi (2011) in which it is stated that 71% of the respondents conduct self-efforts activities outside their classrooms. That is to say, it is indeed that some people tend to view that learning can be carried out outside the classroom. This perception corresponds with Holec (1981) who declares that the learner autonomy allows the students to learn and apply their knowledge and skill outside the direct learning context. It means the students are not only learning the target language but also learning *how to learn*, following the narrow perspective of autonomous learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Therefore, the students may extend their learning beyond the classroom context to constantly develop the awareness of a life-long process (Najeeb, 2012).

Table 8. Students' Perception of Independent Learning

Respondents	What is independent learning?
2	<i>Belajar mandiri yang dilakukan dikelas atau diluar kelas</i> “[Conducting] independent learning in class or outside the classroom ”
4	<i>Suatu pembelajaran mandiri bisa dilaksanakan dimana saja</i> “An independent learning can be carried out anywhere ”
5	<i>Belajar mandiri di kelas</i> “[Conducting] independent learning in a class ”
6	More flexibility in implementing learning
7	<i>Independent learning adalah suatu pembelajaran mandiri bisa dimana saja dan menggunakan waktu yang diinginkan</i> “Independent learning is a self-study that can be conducted anywhere and anytime ”
8	<i>Definisi independent learning adalah suatu pembelajaran yang sifatnya mandiri bisa dimana saja dan menggunakan waktu sesuai yang diinginkan</i> “The definition of independent learning is a self-study that can be conducted anywhere and anytime ”
18	<i>Independent learning is learn about everything, dimanapun, kapanpun</i> “Independent learning is learning about everything anywhere and anytime ”

Furthermore, some other students define independent learning as a learning strategy that can be carried out individually or in a group as illustrated in Table 9. That is to say, some of the respondents in this study tend to view independent learning as a strategy to organize their own learning either individually or in control of their teachers and peers. These findings correspond with Dam (1990) who take the social aspect of learning into the account of learner autonomy. The idea of learner autonomy can be perceived as the students' willingness and capacity to act individually or in cooperation with other people since the students are considered as a socially responsible person (Dam, 1990). Moreover, the concept of learner autonomy considers the students as individuals who have the needs and rights to develop their own learning responsibility (Najeeb, 2012); thus, the students may have the ability to develop their skills in language learning either individually or in a group.

Table 9. Students' Perception of Independent Learning

Respondents	What is independent learning?
1	<i>Belajar dengan memanfaatkan sumberdaya yang ada yakni contohnya melalui internet, manage waktu, stress dan niat agar dapat belajar mandiri dengan baik. Tentu saja dengan menentukan terlebih dahulu apa yang ingin dipelajari dan bagaimana pelaksanaannya apakah perseorangan atau berkelompok</i> "Learning by utilizing available resources, such as through the Internet, [able] to manage time, stress, and intention to learn well and independently . [Also] By determining what you want to learn and how to do it [whether] individually or in a group "
12	<i>Belajar yang mandiri adalah belajar yang dilakukan sendiri, yaitu dengan memahami pembelajaran dengan sendiri, ex: belajar sendiri sebelum kuliah dilaksanakan</i> "Independent learning is a self-study, by understanding the learning [materials] on their own . Example: conducting self-study before [joining] lectures"
35	<i>Belajar secara mandiri, mencari informasi melalui internet serta buku juga belajar secara kelompok</i> "Learning independently, searching for information through the Internet and books, studying in groups "
47	<i>Belajar secara mandiri menurut saya bisa memahami sesuatu dengan sendiri</i> "Independent learning, in my opinion, can understand something by ourselves "
49	<i>Independent learning adalah suatu kegiatan yang dilakukan dengan sendiri, dan berusaha untuk belajar sendiri</i> "Independent learning is an activity that is carried out by ourselves , and [it] seeks to learn [something] on our own "
55	<i>Pembelajaran mandiri menurutku adalah pembelajaran yang kita lakukan sendiri dengan mandiri</i> "Independent learning, in my opinion, is a learning [activity] that we carry out alone independently "
59	<i>Proses belajar yang mengajak siswa atau teman melakukan tindakan mandiri yang melibatkan terkadang satu orang, biasanya satu kelompok</i> "A learning process asking students or friends to carry out independent action involving [sometimes] one person, usually a group "
66	<i>Belajar mandiri menurut saya adalah bisa belajar dengan caranya sendiri dan menyelesaikan masalah belajarnya sendiri</i> "Independent learning, in my opinion, is having the capability to learn on their own way and solve their own learning problems "
82	Independent learning is when the students can be independent in learning their studies

There are also several students arguing that the independent learning means the students understand and know what to expect in the learning activities as portrayed in Table 10. In other words, some of the respondents in this study views independent learning as the capacity to take

charge of their own learning (Holec, 1981). Similarly, Joshi (2011) asserts that 80% students of the previous study perceive *being responsible* is one of the important aspects of their own learning. It is necessary for the students to take their own role and to learn beyond the prescribed materials. Hence, even though the teachers' role in learning is essential, it is also crucial for the students to recognize their roles and be responsible in their own learning either inside or beyond the classroom. Correspondingly, Benson and Voller (1997) describe learner autonomy as the capability to have *self-regulated* responsibility. It means that the learner autonomy allows the students to construct the informed decisions about their own learning; hence, they are able to focus on their own needs and expectations during the learning process.

Table 10. Students' Perception of Independent Learning

Respondents	What is independent learning?
10	<i>Belajar yang mandiri itu ketika seseorang itu paham apa yang akan ditanyakan sebelum pertanyaan itu dipertanyakan</i> “Independent learning is when a person understands what will be asked [even] before the question is asked ”
16	<i>Belajar mandiri adalah seseorang yang berusaha secara mandiri menemukan materi pembelajaran yang akan dibahas dikelas. Mempelajari kembali materi yang diajarkan. Dan berusaha mencari artikel atau jurnal yang mendukung pembelajaran untuk memperkuat pengetahuannya</i> “Independent learning is [when] someone tries to independently find learning material that will be discussed in a class . [He/she] studies the material being taught. [And] try to find articles or journals that support and strengthen their knowledge ”
19	<i>Belajar yang mandiri adalah mencari tahu sendiri materi yang akan dipelajari untuk kebutuhannya sendiri dengan tidak bergantung pada orang lain</i> “Independent learning is finding out the [learning] material by ourselves to be learned for our own needs [and] not relying on others ”
28	<i>Independent learning adalah sebuah proses pembelajaran yang berorientasi pada kemandirian individu tersebut. Jadi individu tersebut berusaha mencari ilmu dengan mandiri dan tidak menggantungkan pada orang lain</i> “Independent learning is a learning process that is oriented towards the independence of the individual . Thus, an individual seeks knowledge independently and not relying on others ”
34	The person who have a motivation to learn, and can understand the study, also can re-explain
38	Independent learning is people who do the process of “learning to be” on their own participation by not relying on others

Moreover, some students state that independent learning means every student has their own learning styles as portrayed in Table 11. Some respondents believe that the concept of independent learning expects the students to have the insight into their own styles and strategies of learning. These findings are in line with Thanasoulas (2000) who asserts that understanding their own learning style is one of the characteristics of learner autonomy. It means the students are able to actively take an approach to learning, willingly take risks to communicate with the target language, and properly complete their homework.

Recognizing their own learning style is also included in the three basic pedagogical principles in language learning autonomy. The three basic pedagogical principles in language learning autonomy involves three major aspects; (1) *learner involvement*, concerns with the students' engagement to share responsibility during the learning process; (2) *learner reflection*, deals with assisting the students in critically planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning; (3) *appropriate target language use* as the medium of learning the language (Najeeb, 2012). By realizing their own learning style, the students may have the capability to be responsible in constructing their

own learning strategies; hence, they may enhance their learner autonomy not only in language learning but also in other subjects of learning.

Table 11. Students' Perception of Independent Learning

Respondents	What is independent learning?
22	<p><i>Menurut saya belajar yang mandiri adalah metode dalam kita belajar, dimana kita bisa mendapat informasi sebanyak mungkin. Karena tidak bisa dipungkiri bahwa setiap anak memiliki caranya masing-masing dalam belajar</i></p> <p>“In my opinion, independent learning is a method for our learning, where we can get as much information as possible. Because, it is undeniable that every child has their own way of learning”</p>
32	<p><i>Seseorang yang independent learning menurut saya adalah dia yang mampu untuk membangkitkan rasa semangat dalam belajar kapan pun dimanapun itu. Selalu kreatif dalam menemukan cara yang tepat dan nyaman untuk belajar. Tidak menyerah dalam menemukan hal-hal baru</i></p> <p>“[The independent learner] is someone, in my opinion, who is able to develop a sense of enthusiasm in learning anytime and anywhere. [He/she] is always creative in finding the right and convenient way to learn. [And] do not give up in finding new things”</p>
33	<p><i>Belajar tidak dalam sistem kebut semalam</i></p> <p>“A learning that is not [conducted] in the last minute”</p>
40	<p><i>Belajar mandiri adalah belajar yang bisa mengatur waktu dengan baik</i></p> <p>“Independent learning is a learning [in which we can] manage time well”</p>
50	<p><i>Menurut saya independent learning adalah ketika kita tidak khawatir untuk mencari tahu dengan benar jawaban akan segala pertanyaan yang terlintas di pikiran kita, lalu kita diskusikan dengan orang-orang yang kita inginkan</i></p> <p>“In my opinion, independent learning is when we are not worried to find out the answers to all questions that come to our mind, then we discuss it with other people”</p>
73	<p><i>Bisa mengatur waktu, memprioritaskan yang wajib dilakukan</i></p> <p>“Having the capability to manage the time and prioritize [something] that must be done”</p>

CONCLUSION

The present study is projected to answer two major questions. Firstly, this study is conducted to assess the undergraduate students' level of independent learning to recognize their autonomy in language learning. The findings show that 56.09% of the respondents (46 students) have *moderate independence*. In addition, it is found that the students seem to have high determination to succeed and become better students, ask for help if they are having difficulty, have the awareness of their own study approach, and able to take the initiatives to engage with different study approach. Nevertheless, some students tend to have low interest in their studies, low expectation about what they want to learn, and low possibility in questioning what they are told. Thus, it is important for the teachers to enhance the students' *moderate independence* into *high independence* by providing the access to a number of learning opportunities and providing several opportunities for the students to have purposeful and meaningful learning engagement.

Secondly, this study is carried out to reveal the undergraduate students' thoughts and perception towards independent learning. The findings show that some students define independent learning as a learning strategy that can be carried out anywhere and anytime. Other students describe independent learning as a learning strategy that can be carried out individually or in a group. Moreover, other students state that independent learning means the students know what to expect in the learning activities and able to recognize their own learning styles. The students, either consciously or unconsciously, are able to relate the concept of independent learning with various degrees of independence that are included in the notion of learner autonomy.

The present study provides beneficial information related to how to assess the students' independent learning. Hence, both the teachers and students are able to design and select learning activities that may help the students improve their independence in learning. In addition, this study also provides a case in point for the students to assess their capability in learning independently especially their capacity in identifying and thinking about their approach in language learning. Although this study gives advantageous information pertinent to the undergraduate students' level and perceptions of independent language learning, yet the respondents of this study should be treated with caution. This is due to the fact that the respondents in the present study are obtained only from two study programs. Future researchers may need to conduct further studies with larger respondents from several other study programs to enhance the generalizability of the study. In addition, further studies may need to be carried out involving other manifestations of learner autonomy, or involving the learner autonomy itself, by considering the complex socio-cognitive system of the concept.

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