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## **Autonomous learning among Vietnamese EFL students: A case study at Thu Dau Mot University**

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**Abstract.** Learner autonomy has been widely recognized as a key factor in successful language learning; however, its development remains challenging in many EFL contexts. This study investigates autonomous learning among undergraduate EFL students at Thu Dau Mot University, Vietnam. Specifically, it examines students' awareness of learner autonomy, identifies the difficulties they encounter, and explores the strategies they employ to enhance their self-directed learning. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, with data collected from 120 first-year English-major students through a structured questionnaire. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative responses provided additional insights into students' perceptions. The findings reveal that most students demonstrate a high level of awareness regarding the importance of autonomous learning, with over 80% acknowledging its impact on academic achievement and 88% reporting engagement in self-directed learning. However, a substantial proportion of students experience difficulties in practicing autonomy, particularly due to a lack of effective learning strategies, insufficient planning skills, low motivation, and limited access to learning resources. Although students reported using strategies such as self-control and goal-setting, these were applied inconsistently. The study highlights a significant gap between students' awareness and actual practice of learner autonomy. It suggests that enhancing metacognitive skills, providing structured pedagogical support, and improving learning resources are essential to fostering effective autonomous learning among university EFL students.

**Keywords.** learner autonomy; autonomous learning; Vietnamese EFL students; higher education

### **1. Introduction**

Learner autonomy has become a central concept in language education, particularly in the context of modern English language teaching and learning. Autonomous learners are those who are capable of setting their own learning goals and taking responsibility for planning, managing, and evaluating their learning processes. In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the role of learner autonomy in second language acquisition, as it is widely recognized as a key factor contributing to effective and sustainable learning outcomes.

The concept of learner autonomy has been interpreted in various ways in language education and is often associated with terms such as learner independence, self-direction, and independent learning. Holec (1981) defined learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning," a definition that has been widely adopted in subsequent research (Benson,

2007). From a broader perspective, autonomy can also be viewed as a social process involving a redistribution of responsibility between teachers and learners in the construction of knowledge. Previous studies have emphasized that learner autonomy plays an important role in overcoming social, cultural, and institutional constraints in learning (Benson & Voller, 1997), and is particularly crucial in language learning, where learners must not only acquire knowledge but also develop the ability to use the language independently in real-life contexts (Pennycook, 1997).

To support the development of learner autonomy, researchers have highlighted the importance of equipping learners with cognitive and metacognitive strategies, encouraging goal-setting, and providing access to authentic learning materials (Thanasoulas, 2000; Sinclair, 2000). Despite these efforts, many learners still struggle to develop the necessary skills to manage their own learning effectively. In Vietnam, self-study has long been regarded as a key component of educational success, particularly in the context of rapid socio-economic development and the expansion of information technology. For students in foreign language programs, the volume and diversity of knowledge required make autonomous learning not only beneficial but essential.

In the rapidly evolving educational landscape of the twenty-first century, fostering autonomous learning is considered an essential objective of higher education. University students are expected to actively engage in self-directed learning activities in order to develop both subject knowledge and independent learning capacities under the guidance of lecturers. This expectation is particularly significant for EFL students at universities, where learners are required to acquire extensive knowledge across various domains while simultaneously developing high levels of language proficiency.

However, in practice, autonomous learning among Vietnamese EFL students appears to face several challenges. Many students do not allocate sufficient time to self-study, lack effective self-regulation strategies, and have not yet developed appropriate mechanisms for managing their own learning. These limitations may negatively affect their academic performance and overall learning quality. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate students' current levels of learner autonomy, identify the difficulties they encounter, and explore strategies to enhance their self-directed learning abilities.

Given these considerations, this study investigates autonomous learning among Vietnamese EFL students at Thu Dau Mot University. Specifically, it aims to examine students' awareness of autonomous learning, identify the difficulties they encounter, and explore the strategies they use to develop and strengthen their learner autonomy. By doing so, the study seeks to provide practical recommendations to enhance students' autonomous learning abilities and contribute to improving learning effectiveness and training quality.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1. Learner autonomy**

The concept of learner autonomy originates from Western educational philosophy and has evolved from the broader notion of autonomy (Little, 1999). It has been interpreted from various perspectives in the field of language education. Holec (1979) initially defined learner autonomy as the capacity to take responsibility for one's own learning. Building on this definition, subsequent scholars have expanded and refined the concept.

Little (1991) conceptualizes autonomy as an independent capacity, referring to the ability to think critically, make decisions, and act independently. Similarly, Dickinson (1993) views learner autonomy as a situation in which learners are fully responsible for all decisions

related to their learning and for implementing those decisions. Nguyen (2014) emphasizes both the willingness and the ability of learners to take responsibility for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating their learning, often through negotiation with teachers. From another perspective, Dam (1995) defines autonomy as learners' readiness to accept responsibility in order to meet their own learning needs and goals.

Benson and Voller (1997) provide a broader interpretation, suggesting that learner autonomy may refer to (1) learning independently, (2) a set of skills for self-directed learning, (3) learners' responsibility for their learning, or (4) learners' right to make decisions about their learning. Despite these varied interpretations, learner autonomy generally encompasses three key elements. First, it involves learners' capacity for self-regulation, including skills such as critical thinking, decision-making, and self-directed learning (Holec, 1979; Benson & Voller, 1997). Second, it refers to a learning condition in which learners assume control and responsibility for their learning processes (Dickinson, 1993). Third, it includes the notion of learner ownership, whereby learners have the right to participate in decisions regarding learning objectives, methods, materials, and assessment.

### **2.2. The importance of autonomy in language learning**

Learner autonomy has increasingly been recognized as a key objective in language education, particularly in higher education contexts (Sinclair, 2000). A growing body of research highlights its significant benefits for language learning. For example, Dafei (2007) found a strong relationship between learners' autonomy and their English proficiency, indicating that students with higher levels of autonomy tend to achieve better language outcomes. Similarly, Balcikanli (2010) reported that when students are given opportunities to make decisions about their learning, they develop more positive attitudes and engage more meaningfully in the learning process.

Autonomy is also closely associated with lifelong learning. Thomson (1996) describes language learning as a lifelong process, while Jacobs and Farrell (2001) emphasize that learners should view learning as continuous and ongoing. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) and Azizi (2014) further argue that learner autonomy prepares individuals for lifelong learning beyond formal education. In this sense, autonomy serves as a foundation for sustained personal and professional development.

Moreover, learner autonomy enables students to become more independent, creative, and effective learners. Harmer (2007) suggests that developing autonomous learning strategies helps compensate for the limitations of classroom time. Autonomous learners are better able to learn from both successes and failures, thereby improving their future learning performance (Crabbe, 1999). Umeda (2000, as cited in Onozawa, 2010) identifies key benefits of autonomy, including the ability to adapt to social changes, develop individuality, and broaden educational and cultural experiences.

In the context of foreign language learning, autonomy is particularly important because learners must not only acquire linguistic knowledge but also develop the ability to use the language independently (Pennycook, 1997). The emphasis on learner autonomy aligns with the communicative approach, which redefines the roles of teachers and students and promotes active learner participation (Paiva, 2008). Overall, learner autonomy equips students with the necessary skills to overcome various learning challenges and achieve their educational goals.

### **2.3. Students' perceptions of autonomous learning**

Students' perceptions of autonomous learning play a crucial role in shaping their learning behaviors. Research indicates that learners' understanding of autonomy often varies and may be influenced by their educational context. Many students tend to equate autonomous

learning with studying independently without teacher support, which reflects a partial or inaccurate understanding of the concept.

Studies have shown that a considerable number of students lack a clear understanding of learner autonomy. For instance, some learners believe that autonomous learning simply means self-study without guidance, rather than a process involving planning, monitoring, and evaluation. This misconception may stem from limited exposure to the concept, particularly in educational contexts where teacher-centered approaches are dominant (Benson & Huang, 2008).

Students' limited awareness of the attributes and significance of autonomous learning can hinder their ability to develop effective learning strategies. Therefore, enhancing students' understanding of learner autonomy is essential for promoting more effective and meaningful learning practices.

## **2.4. Difficulties and Challenges in Autonomous Learning**

### *2.4.1. Difficulties*

Despite its importance, learners often face various challenges in developing autonomy. First, many students lack clear learning goals and effective learning strategies when working independently (Rubin & Thompson, 1994). Without proper guidance, they may feel uncertain about what to study and how to study effectively. Second, although technological advancements provide access to abundant learning resources, students often struggle to select appropriate materials and evaluate the reliability of online information. This difficulty may hinder their learning efficiency. Psychological factors also pose significant challenges. Many students experience anxiety and fear of making mistakes, which negatively affects their willingness to engage in autonomous learning. Additionally, poor time management skills can limit students' ability to devote sufficient time to self-study (Wenden, 1987). Furthermore, some learners tend to give up easily when encountering difficulties or unsatisfactory results. As Sheerin (1997) notes, it is often easier for learners to remain dependent on teachers rather than take responsibility for their own learning. These challenges highlight the complexity of developing learner autonomy.

### *2.4.2. Possible causes*

Several factors contribute to the difficulties learners face in autonomous learning.

(1) Traditional roles of teachers and learners: In many educational contexts, teachers are viewed as the primary source of knowledge, while students play a passive role. This traditional model limits students' opportunities to develop independent learning skills (Sheerin, 1989; Dickinson, 1992; Wenden, 1991). As a result, students may find autonomous learning challenging and unfamiliar.

(2) Lack of learning strategies: Effective learning strategies are essential for successful autonomous learning. However, many students lack awareness of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, which reduces their ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning (Wenden, 1991).

(3) Learners' attitudes and beliefs: Learners' beliefs and attitudes significantly influence their learning behaviors. Negative beliefs about language learning or lack of confidence may hinder the development of autonomy (Benson & Lor, 1999; White, 1999). Attitudes shaped by past experiences can also affect learners' motivation and engagement.

(4) Lack of motivation: Motivation plays a critical role in autonomous learning. Highly motivated learners are more likely to take responsibility for their learning, whereas lack of motivation can hinder engagement and persistence. As Cunningsworth (1984) notes, motivation directly affects the effectiveness of learning.

(5) Learning materials: The availability and appropriateness of learning materials also influence autonomous learning. Students may feel overwhelmed by the abundance of resources and struggle to select suitable materials, which can reduce their confidence and motivation.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research methods**

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of autonomous learning among English-majored freshmen at Thu Dau Mot University. The quantitative data are used to describe students' self-study practices and the strategies they employ for autonomous learning. Meanwhile, the qualitative data consist of additional written responses provided by students in the questionnaire, offering deeper insights into their perspectives and experiences.

#### **3.2 Population and sampling**

Participants in this study are first-year students because they may still face limitations in developing learner autonomy. In high school, students often rely heavily on teacher-centered instruction rather than self-directed learning. Although freshmen are generally motivated to learn English, they tend to maintain previous learning habits and depend on lecturers. Additionally, many students lack metacognitive strategies and have difficulty accessing appropriate learning resources, which may hinder their academic development. Therefore, first-year English-major students were considered an appropriate target group for this study.

In this study, 120 first-year English-major students were randomly selected from approximately 400 students across 8 different classes at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Thu Dau Mot University. Among the participants, 50 were male (42%) and 70 were female (58%), with ages ranging from 18 to 20. All participants had prior experience in learning English before entering university. Prior to participation, all students were informed of the study's objectives and voluntarily agreed to take part in the survey.

#### **3.3 Research instruments**

The primary instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. Questionnaires were selected because they are efficient tools for collecting data from a large number of participants while requiring minimal effort from respondents (Brown, 1995; Oppenheim, 1993). They are particularly useful for comparing responses across groups, which aligns with the purpose of this study. The questionnaire consisted of 13 items and was developed based on a review of relevant literature and previous studies. The items were designed to address the research questions of the study. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: Section 1 (Questions 1–3): Demographic information, including age, gender, and years of learning English; Section 2 (Questions 4–7): Students' focus on autonomous learning, including Likert-scale items, yes/no questions, and self-reported behaviors; Section 3 (Questions 8–12): Students' difficulties in autonomous learning and the strategies they use, including multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and yes/no items; Section 4 (Question 13): An open-ended question allowing participants to express their opinions and expectations regarding institutional and teacher support.

#### **3.4 Data collection procedures**

The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and distributed individually to first-year English-major students. The items were clearly structured and required participants to select responses or provide brief written answers. All 120 participants completed the online survey. The questionnaire was administered in English. Before completing the survey,

participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study. The collected data were subsequently organized and presented in the form of tables, charts, and numerical summaries.

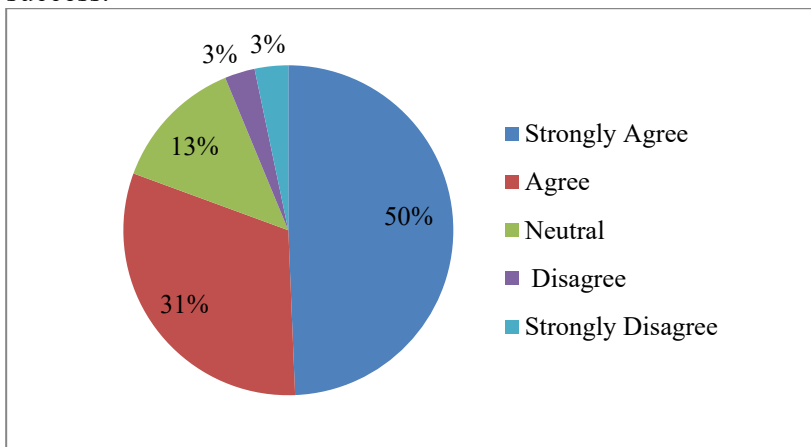
### 3.5 Data analysis methods

Data collection was conducted over a period of approximately one week. The analysis involved three main steps. First, the questionnaire responses were coded for data analysis. Second, the data were entered into Microsoft Excel, where responses were organized and stored systematically. Third, the data were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistical methods. The results were presented in the form of percentages, tables, and charts to provide a clear overview of the findings. This approach enabled a more precise and quantitative interpretation of the data. The analysis focused on addressing the two research questions and identifying key patterns in students' autonomous learning practices.

## 4. Findings

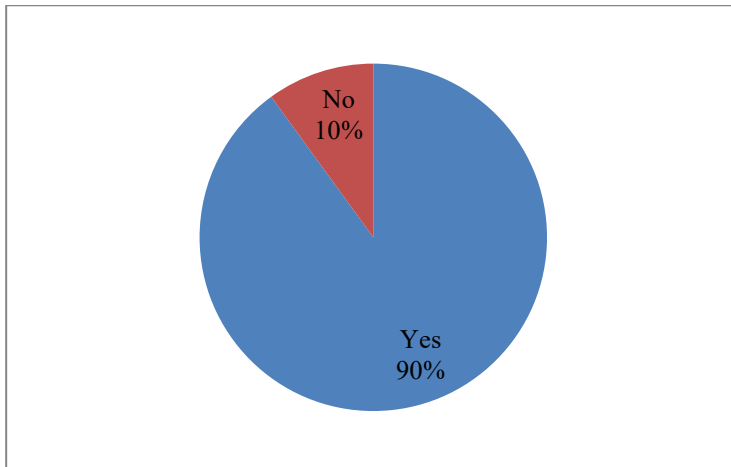
### 4.1 Students' autonomous learning reality

The data presented in Figure 1 indicate that a majority of students recognize the importance of autonomous learning in achieving their academic goals. Specifically, 60 students (50%) strongly agreed, and 38 students (31%) agreed with the statement. Meanwhile, 16 students (13%) expressed a neutral opinion. Only a small proportion of respondents disagreed (4 students, 3%) or strongly disagreed (2 students, 3%). Overall, the findings suggest that most students have a positive perception of the role of autonomous learning in their academic success.



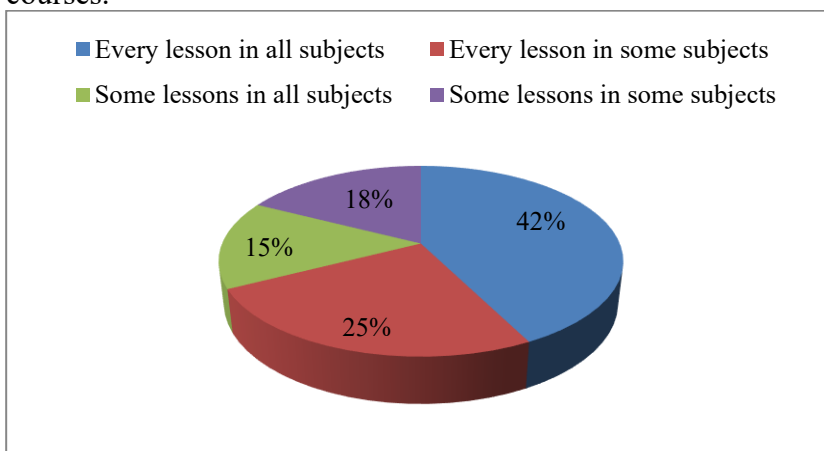
**Figure 1.** Do you agree autonomous learning has a significant impact on your academic goals?

As shown in Figure 2, the vast majority of participants (108 students, 90%) reported that they had been required to engage in self-study at university. In contrast, only 12 students (10%) indicated that they had not been asked to do so. This result suggests that self-study is widely incorporated into the teaching and learning process at the university level.



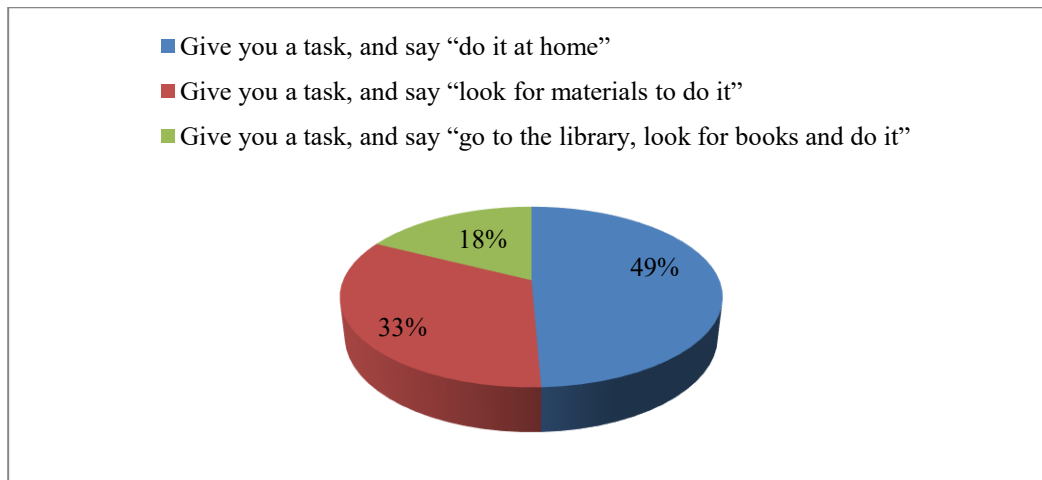
**Figure 2.** At university, have you ever been asked to do self-study?

The results presented in Figure 3 reveal that students are frequently required to engage in self-study. Specifically, 51 students (42%) reported being assigned self-study tasks in every lesson across all subjects. Additionally, 30 students (25%) indicated that they were asked to do self-study in every lesson of some subjects. Meanwhile, 18 students (15%) reported being assigned self-study in some lessons across all subjects, and 21 students (18%) indicated that self-study was required in some lessons of some subjects. These findings demonstrate that self-study is a regular component of university learning, although the frequency varies across subjects and courses.



**Figure 3.** How often are you asked to do self-study?

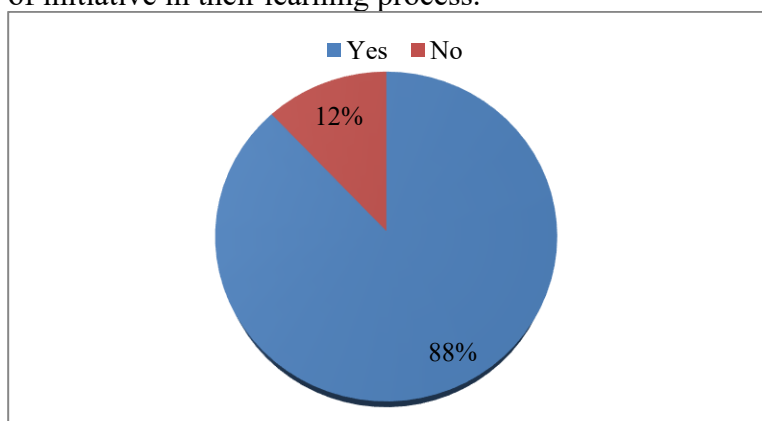
As illustrated in Figure 4, nearly half of the students (59 students, 49%) reported that teachers typically assign tasks and instruct them to complete them at home. In addition, 40 students (33%) indicated that teachers ask them to find relevant materials to complete assigned tasks. The remaining 21 students (18%) reported that teachers direct them to use library resources when completing assignments. These results suggest that while teachers encourage autonomous learning, their guidance often remains limited to assigning tasks rather than providing structured support or strategies.



**Figure 4.** What do your teachers often do when asking you to do self-study?

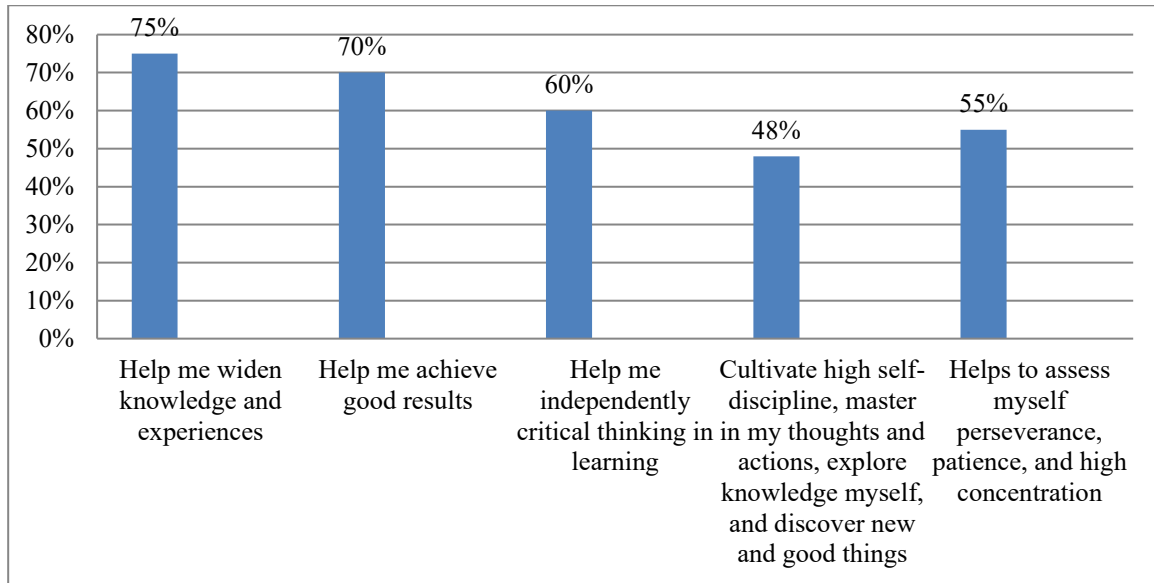
#### 4.2 The importance of autonomous learning

The results in Figure 5 show that a large majority of students (105 students, 88%) reported that they had engaged in English learning independently, without being prompted by their teachers. Only 15 students (12%) indicated that they had not done so. This finding suggests that most students are aware of the importance of autonomous learning and demonstrate a certain degree of initiative in their learning process.



**Figure 5.** Have you ever studied English without your teacher's request?

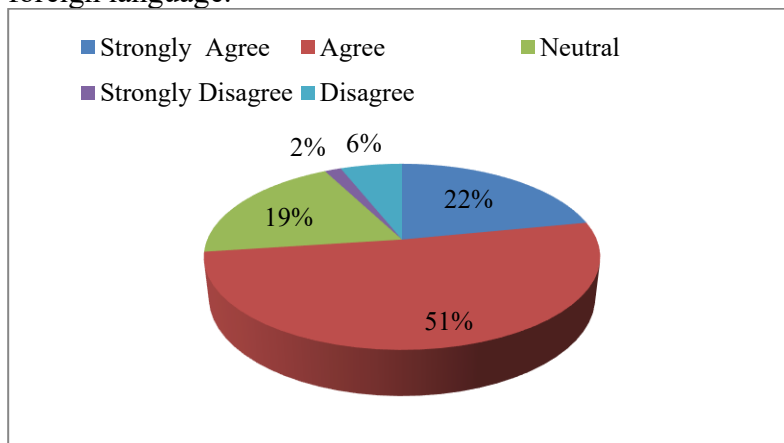
As presented in Figure 6, students reported several motivations for engaging in autonomous learning. The most common reason, selected by 75% of respondents, was the desire to expand knowledge and experience. Additionally, 70% of students indicated that autonomous learning helps them achieve better academic results. Other reasons include developing critical thinking skills (60%), improving self-discipline and personal development (48%), and enhancing perseverance, patience, and concentration (55%). These findings indicate that students are generally aware of the benefits of autonomous learning and recognize its role in both academic and personal development.



**Figure 6.** What are the reasons that urge you to study English without your teacher’s request?

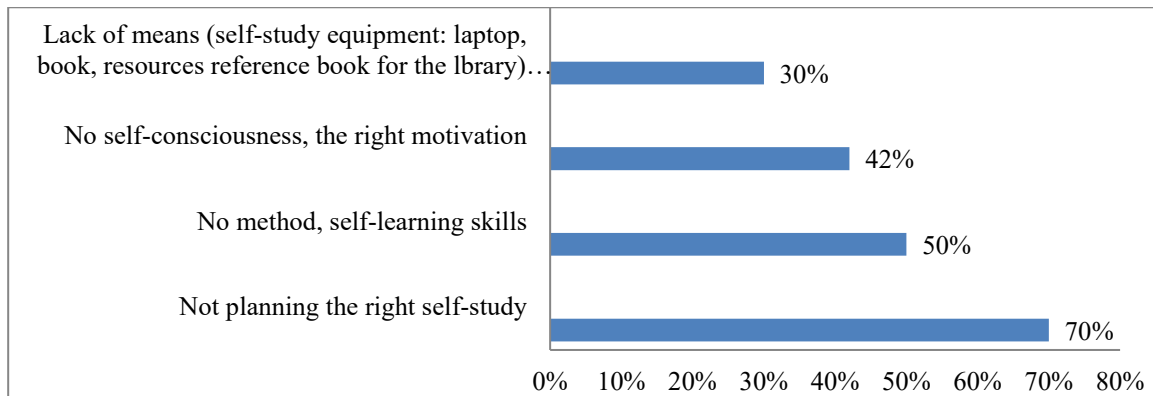
#### 4.3 Difficulties in autonomous learning and strategies used

The results shown in Figure 7 indicate that many students perceive autonomous learning as challenging. Specifically, 22% of students strongly agreed and 51% agreed that studying English independently is difficult. Meanwhile, 19% expressed a neutral opinion, and only a small percentage disagreed (6%) or strongly disagreed (2%). Overall, the majority of students experience difficulties in autonomous language learning, particularly in learning English as a foreign language.



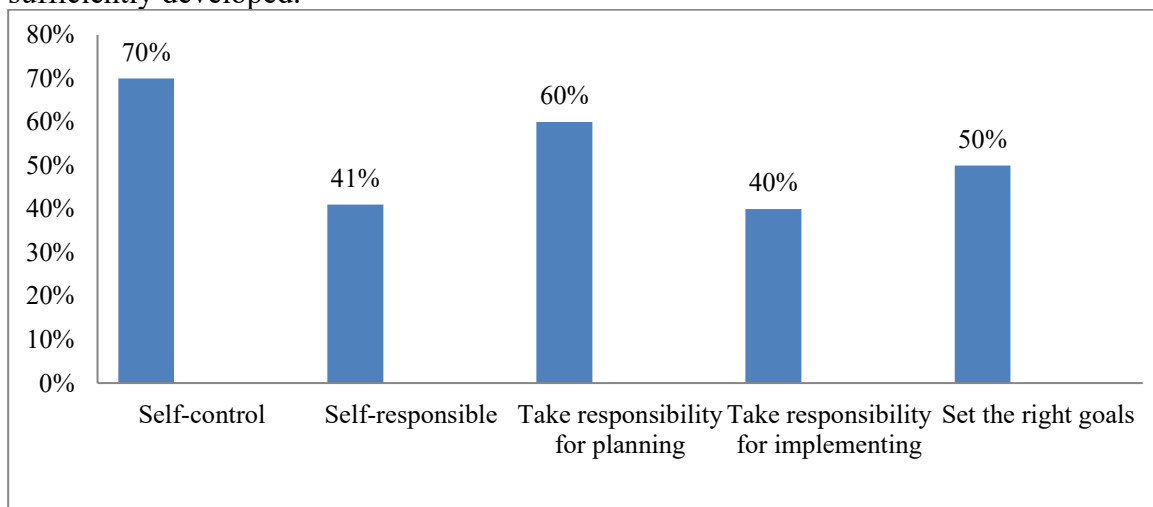
**Figure 7.** Do you agree it’s hard to study English on your own ?

Figure 8 presents several key factors contributing to students’ difficulties in autonomous learning. The most frequently reported reason (70%) was the lack of a proper self-study plan. Additionally, 50% of students indicated that they lack effective self-study methods and skills. Other factors include a lack of motivation and self-discipline (42%) and insufficient learning facilities and resources (30%). These findings suggest that both internal factors (e.g., motivation, skills) and external factors (e.g., resources) play significant roles in hindering students’ autonomous learning.



**Figure 8.** What are reason that you think it is hard to study English on your own?

As shown in Figure 9, students reported using a variety of strategies to develop their autonomous learning. The most common strategy was self-control (70%). In addition, 60% of students reported taking responsibility for planning their learning, while 50% emphasized the importance of effective planning strategies. Other strategies include self-responsibility (41%) and taking responsibility for implementing learning plans (40%). These results indicate that although students are aware of certain strategies, their application may not be consistent or sufficiently developed.



**Figure 9.** What strategies do you use to establish and strengthen your learning autonomy?

#### 4.4 Students' expectations

Responses to the open-ended question “What do you expect your teachers or the Faculty of Foreign Languages to do to support your autonomous learning?” reveal several key expectations from students. The most frequently mentioned expectation (30 students) was the need for guidance on effective self-study methods. In addition, 25 students expressed a desire for teachers to help them set clear learning goals. Other expectations include providing more self-study resources and facilities (20 students), offering courses on self-study skills (20 students), enhancing students' knowledge and experience (10 students), increasing motivation (10 students), assigning more challenging tasks (10 students), and recommending additional learning materials (10 students). These findings suggest that students require more structured support, practical guidance, and resource availability to enhance their autonomous learning.

## **5. Discussion and recommendations**

### **5.1. Discussion**

The findings of this study indicate that English-majored freshmen at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Thu Dau Mot University, are generally aware of the importance of autonomous learning. This is clearly supported by the quantitative results, in which 81% of students agreed that autonomous learning has a significant impact on their academic goals, and 88% reported engaging in English learning independently without teacher prompts. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted in the Vietnamese context (e.g., Huong, 2008; Le, 2009; Trang, 2011), which highlight the growing recognition of learner autonomy in higher education.

In addition, the high percentage of students (90%) participating in self-study activities and the frequency with which self-study is assigned (e.g., 42% in every lesson across all subjects) suggest that autonomous learning is not only recognized but also regularly practiced. Students also demonstrated a clear understanding of its benefits, such as expanding knowledge (75%), improving academic performance (70%), and developing critical thinking skills (60%). These findings indicate that students possess a relatively strong cognitive awareness of the value of autonomous learning and its role in both academic achievement and personal development.

However, despite this high level of awareness, students do not demonstrate a correspondingly high level of autonomous learning in practice. The results reveal that a majority of students (73%) perceive self-study, particularly in learning English, as difficult. This difficulty can be attributed to several factors identified in the study, including the lack of a proper self-study plan (70%), insufficient learning methods and strategies (50%), low motivation and self-discipline (42%), and limited access to learning resources (30%). These findings provide empirical support for the claim that students' autonomous learning remains underdeveloped.

Furthermore, although students reported using certain strategies such as self-control (70%), planning (60%), and goal-setting (50%), these strategies appear to be applied inconsistently and without systematic guidance. This suggests that students may possess a basic awareness of autonomous learning strategies but lack the metacognitive skills necessary to implement them effectively. As a result, their autonomous learning processes remain fragmented and inefficient.

Another important finding concerns the role of teachers in fostering learner autonomy. The data indicate that teachers primarily support autonomous learning by assigning tasks (49%) or asking students to find materials independently (33%), with only a small proportion directing students to structured resources such as libraries (18%). This suggests that while teachers encourage self-study, their support is largely task-oriented rather than strategy-oriented. Consequently, students may not receive sufficient guidance on how to learn autonomously, which limits the effectiveness of their self-directed learning efforts.

These findings help explain why students, despite being aware of the importance of autonomous learning, continue to rely heavily on teacher guidance and exhibit limited autonomy in practice. This is further reflected in students' expectations, which emphasize the need for more explicit instruction on self-study methods, additional learning resources, and greater motivational support. Such expectations indicate that students are not fully equipped with the necessary skills and support systems to develop autonomy independently.

The findings also align with previous research suggesting that learners often prefer less demanding activities and tend to focus more on receptive skills (e.g., listening and reading) rather than productive skills (e.g., speaking). This tendency may be linked to students' lack of

confidence, insufficient practice opportunities, and limited experience with autonomous learning strategies.

Overall, the results highlight a clear gap between students' awareness of autonomous learning and their actual learning practices. While students recognize its importance and demonstrate a certain level of engagement, they lack the necessary skills, strategies, and structured support to implement it effectively. This gap may be largely attributed to their prior educational experiences, particularly the teacher-centered approach commonly found in high school education, which does not sufficiently promote independent learning.

Therefore, to enhance learner autonomy among university EFL students, it is essential to address both internal and external factors. Internally, students need to develop stronger motivation, self-discipline, and metacognitive skills. Externally, teachers and institutions should provide more structured guidance, including training in self-study strategies, access to appropriate learning resources, and the creation of supportive learning environments. By addressing these factors, students can gradually transition from passive learners to active, autonomous learners capable of managing their own learning effectively.

## **5.2. Recommendations**

### *For Students*

- Actively engage in learning activities. Students should actively participate in class activities and ensure adequate preparation before each lesson. After class, they should review the knowledge learned and apply it in practice to reinforce understanding.
- Develop a clear and structured learning plan. Students should establish a well-organized learning plan that specifies tasks, timelines, and expected outcomes. Effective time management is essential for academic success. Learners should set realistic goals on a weekly, monthly, and yearly basis, based on their current proficiency in language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Learning objectives should be clear, specific, and achievable.
- Monitor and evaluate learning progress. Students should regularly assess their learning process, ideally on a weekly basis. This includes analyzing learning outcomes, identifying difficulties, and adjusting strategies to achieve their goals. Instead of applying strict self-punishment, students are encouraged to adopt constructive self-regulation strategies, such as setting new targets or modifying their study approaches.
- Enhance collaborative learning. Group work is an effective way to support autonomous learning. Students should form small study groups (3–5 members) to share knowledge, exchange learning strategies, and support each other. Groups may include students with different proficiency levels to encourage peer learning. Suggested activities include developing shared study plans, discussing learning materials, assigning roles, conducting peer assessments, and adapting learning strategies based on group feedback.

### *For Teachers*

- Adopt a facilitative role in learning. Teachers should act as facilitators who guide, monitor, and support students' learning processes. In addition to assigning tasks, teachers should emphasize the importance of autonomous learning and encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.

- Provide guidance on learning strategies. Rather than focusing solely on content delivery, teachers should explicitly teach students how to learn effectively. This includes training students in goal-setting, time management, resource selection, and self-evaluation strategies.
- Promote interactive and student-centered learning. Teachers should incorporate discussions, group work, and collaborative activities into their teaching. These methods can enhance student engagement and foster the development of learner autonomy.
- Offer continuous support and feedback. Teachers should create opportunities for students to share their learning difficulties through consultations, emails, or online platforms. Regular interaction can help identify challenges and provide timely support.
- Strengthen monitoring and assessment. Teachers should actively participate in evaluating students' autonomous learning through regular assessments, such as quizzes, discussions, and assignments. These evaluations should reflect students' actual learning progress and provide constructive feedback to improve their performance.

#### *For the School*

- Improve learning facilities. The university should invest in appropriate learning environments, such as self-study rooms and collaborative learning spaces. These facilities can support both individual and group learning activities outside the classroom.
- Enhance library resources. The school should provide a diverse and reliable collection of learning materials, including textbooks, reference books, and digital resources. This will help students access high-quality information and reduce reliance on unverified online sources.
- Promote learner-centered teaching approaches. The institution should encourage and support teachers in adopting innovative, student-centered teaching methods that foster autonomy.
- Organize training and workshops. The school should offer seminars and workshops on autonomous learning skills for both students and teachers. These programs can raise awareness and provide practical guidance for developing effective self-directed learning.

## **6. Conclusions**

Based on both theoretical analysis and empirical data, several key conclusions can be drawn. Autonomous learning plays a crucial role in improving students' academic performance and enhancing their knowledge acquisition. Most students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Thu Dau Mot University, are aware of the importance of autonomous learning. However, students' autonomous learning remains limited in practice due to a lack of effective strategies, insufficient learning skills, inadequate planning, and limited access to learning resources. The study also proposes several practical solutions to promote autonomous learning among English-majored freshmen.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted on a relatively small sample and relied primarily on questionnaire data, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, constraints related to time, resources, and research experience may have affected the depth and scope of the analysis. Additionally, the

study did not fully explore all aspects of autonomous learning, particularly those related to students' actual learning behaviors and performance. Future research should consider using mixed methods, including interviews or classroom observations, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of learner autonomy. Despite these limitations, this exploratory study is expected to contribute to improving teaching practices and promoting autonomous learning among English-majored freshmen at Thu Dau Mot University.

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