

Learners' Autonomy in Out-Of-Class English Writing Learning Activity of the Third Semester Students of English Education Study Program of Universitas Bandar Lampung

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***Abstract.** This research were conducted to identify and describe the condition of learners' autonomy in out-of-class English writing learning activities of the third semester students of English Education Study Program of Universitas Bandar Lampung. Mixed method was used to conduct this research. I used both quantitative and qualitative approach, in form of questionnaire with five points Likert-scale and unstructured interview in collecting the data. The results of this research implied that the students were in medium level of autonomy measured by calculating the overall mean average of the questionnaire (mean=3.20). From the interview, I got that the students were lack of awareness of their writing learning outside the class.*

Key words: *out-of-class learning activity; learners' autonomy*

A. INTRODUCTION

In English learning, students are expected to master all the language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing is one of the ways to have communication with others besides speaking. The word “writing” seems to be very simple and easy to be done. However, in learning English, there are so many students encounter difficulties in learning writing.

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Writing is a process of thinking. When students are asked to write something by the teacher, they need time to think when they write (Brown, 2002). It means that the students need much time to undergo the process of writing. We also consider that writing is a skill. The teachers are expected to tell the students that learning to write is like learning to play a musical instrument; the more the students practice, the better they will be (Kelly and Gargagliano, 2008). Ferdous (2013) implies that many students learn English inside the classroom but if they do not get the chance to use the language they will not learn it properly. The students cannot only learn how to write in the class room when only they get the instruction from the teacher. They should also practice themselves to write something and to write everything out site the classroom.

Many researchers have done the research about learners' autonomy in the language learning. One of them is Healey (2014) who already did his research on developing learner autonomy. He tended to focus on students' autonomy while they learn a language in the classroom and his research included the teachers as the role to foster the students' autonomy. In his research, there are many methods that the teacher should apply in the teaching process to enhance the autonomy. Researches done by Godwin and Jones (2011) and Talkowska (2015) also focused on developing learners' autonomy. Their research used incorporated internet in the classroom as a means for fostering and developing students' autonomy language learning.

In the other words, those researches show that many teachers already tried to apply the best method in doing their teaching process. However, it cannot be denied that the teachers give less attention to their students' learning experiences beyond the classroom. Many researches on learner autonomy nowadays is conducted in language classroom contexts and students' learning experiences beyond the classroom are less paid into attention.

By having this research, hopefully, it can provide the teachers, especially the lecturers in the place where the research done, the information about the condition of learner autonomy of the third semester students of English education study program which can make the teachers or lecturers more aware and care about the students learning experience beyond the classroom in order to improve the teaching method in enhancing learner autonomy

B. RESEARCH METHOD

A mixed method was employed in this research. Based on the definition from Tashakkori and Creswell (2009) in Sugiono's (2013:18) book, mixed methods is a research in which the researcher collect and analyzes the data, integrates the findings, and draws inference using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in single study or program. This Research applied mixed method in form of both quantitative and qualitative data collecting and data analyzing.

To conduct this research, I used a close-ended questionnaire to elicit and gather information about research respondents. Twenty questionnaire items involved in two dimensions, were generated to measure learner autonomy in out-of-class English Writing learning activity. The first dimension consist 5 aspects, The questions of the questionnaire were adapted from Ardi (2013). The questionnaire was given through Google form to make me easier in collecting and measuring the data.

Beside using the questionnaire, I Used a qualitative approach, in a form of interview to supplement the results and to have further data and information about the condition of learner autonomy in out-of-class English writing learning activity of the students. The interview was used to give more substance and to reveal more detail information.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Questionnaire

I used five points Likert scales in the questionnaire. I should highlight that the use of five-point Likert scale in learners' autonomy questionnaire is followed by the averages mean definition which implies that if the result shows the average means of 3.50, it means that the level of autonomy is in high degree; the averages of 2.50-3.49 means medium degree of autonomy; and the averages of 2.40 or lower means low degree of autonomy (cf. oxford and burry-stock,1995 in Ardi, 2013). It is the average mean of each dimension or the mean of each item that indicates the degree.

Table 4.1: Result of the questionnaire

No. Item	Response Alternatives										N	Total Value	Mean	Average Mean of each aspect	Average Mean of each Dimension	Average Mean
	Never (1)		Rarely (2)		Sometimes (3)		Often (4)		Always (5)							
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%						
1	0	0	3	14.3	11	52.4	4	19.0	3	14.3	21	70	3.33			
2	3	14.3	3	14.3	3	14.3	3	14.3	9	42.9	21	75	3.57			
3	2	9.5	2	9.5	5	23.8	7	33.3	5	23.8	21	74	3.52			
4	0	0	5	23.8	5	23.8	7	33.3	4	19.0	21	73	3.48			
5	3	14.3	0	0.0	6	28.6	6	28.6	6	28.6	21	75	3.57			
6	0	0	1	4.8	5	23.8	3	14.3	12	57.1	21	89	4.24			
7	3	14.3	3	14.3	3	14.3	6	28.6	6	28.6	21	72	3.43			
8	3	14.3	2	9.5	7	33.3	4	19.0	5	23.8	21	69	3.29			
9	3	14.3	2	9.5	7	33.3	6	28.6	3	14.3	21	67	3.19			
10	2	9.5	0	0.0	4	19.0	4	19.0	11	52.4	21	85	4.05			
11	1	4.8	5	23.8	8	38.1	3	14.3	4	19.0	21	67	3.19			
12	3	14.3	4	19.0	4	19.0	6	28.6	4	19.0	21	67	3.19			
13	1	4.8	1	4.8	7	33.3	8	38.1	4	19.0	21	76	3.62			
14	1	4.8	2	9.5	9	42.9	6	28.6	3	14.3	21	71	3.38			
15	1	4.8	5	23.8	9	42.9	4	19.0	2	9.5	21	64	3.05			
16	2	9.5	0	0.0	7	33.3	5	23.8	7	33.3	21	78	3.71			
17	9	42.9	5	23.8	6	28.6	1	4.8	0	0.0	21	41	1.95			
18	11	52.4	3	14.3	3	14.3	3	14.3	1	4.8	21	43	2.05			
19	6	28.6	8	38.1	6	28.6	1	4.8	0	0.0	21	44	2.10			
20	7	33.3	8	38.1	4	19.0	0	0	2	9.5	21	45	2.14			

The result of the questionnaire shows that the average mean of learners' autonomy in out-of-class English writing activity of the third semester students of teacher training and education faculty was 3.20 which defines that they are in the medium level of learner autonomy. Students displayed an average degree of autonomy in out-of-class English writing learning which reached the mean score of 3.20. It can be said in other words that the students' overall ability to take charge of their own English writing learning was at a medium level and it was little bit supported by students' statements in the interview.

the mean average of the first dimension, students' autonomous learning behavior, was 3.57, and the average mean of the second dimension, students' autonomous English Writing learning activities, was 2.84. This result indicates that students reveal high frequency of autonomous English learning behavior and medium degree of English writing learning activities.

Students' Autonomous Learning Behavior

There were 5 aspects which were included in this dimension.

1) Determining Objectives of Learning

The mean score of students' responses to the first aspect was 3.45. In the questionnaire, this aspect was measured by two items (items 1 and 2)

2) Defining the Contents and Progression

The mean of the students' responses to the second aspect, defining the contents and progressions, got 3.50 score. It indicated that the students have high degree of defining the contents and progressions of their out-of-class English writing learning. It was measured by two statement of the questionnaire (items 3 and 4).

3) Selecting Methods and Techniques

The degree of students' autonomous behavior in the aspect of selecting the methods and techniques for their out-of-class English writing learning was high

(mean=3.90). It was the highest mean score among all aspects. This aspect was measured by two statements/items in the questionnaire (items 5 and 6).

4) Monitoring Learning Process

The mean score of the fourth aspect was 3.36 which indicated the medium degree. This aspect was the lowest aspect among the five aspects in autonomous learning behavior dimension. It means that the students paid less attention to the aspect of monitoring the out-of-class English writing learning process. This aspect was measured by two items (items 7 and 8).

5) Evaluating the Process and Outcomes of Learning

The last aspect of autonomous learning behavior dimension, evaluating the and outcomes of learning, got the mean score of 3.62 which indicated the high degree. It implied that the students had high frequency in doing the evaluation for their learning process and outcomes. This aspect was measured by two items (items 9 and 10).

Out-of-class Autonomous English Writing Learning Activities

The second dimension that I measured in the questionnaire was out-of-class autonomous English writing learning activities. The average mean of this dimension was 2.84 which indicated that the degree of students' out-of-class autonomous English writing learning was medium. This dimension contained ten items in the questionnaire (item 11 until 20). The ten items assessed students' autonomous English writing learning activities outside the class.

Interview

To supplement the results and to have further data and information about the condition of learners' autonomy in out-of-class English writing learning activity of the students, the qualitative approach, in a form of interview, was used.

The unstructured-questions were used in this interview. As what have been stated by Sugiono (2013:191) in his book that unstructured-interview is an interview that

does not use systematic and complete guidance of questions to collect the data, but uses only some points as guidelines of the problems that will be asked. To make the good contact with the interviewees and to get the data as natural as possible, I used Bahasa Indonesia, the mother tongue, when asked the questions to the interviewees.

There were thirteen of twenty one students who were able to be interviewed. From the interview, I could get that most of all students only do out-of-class learning activity when they have good mood to learn and only few students aware that learn beyond the class is important to be done. It was indicated by their answers as quoted:

*“I only learn at home when I have good mood to learn.
Sometimes if I have good mood, I will learn, and if I am in a bad
mood, I will not study at all.”
“I only study outside the class based on my willingness and
sometimes I don’t have it”*

One of the aspects which I wanted to know from the students in the interview was their capacity in determining the content and progression which was indicated by arranging the schedule of their learning and by choosing the materials of their learning. In the interview, most of all students stated that they do not have any schedule for their learning at home.

The next aspect that I want to know from the students was monitoring learning process which can be indicated by deciding the time and the length of their learning outside the class. Most of all students admitted that they do not determine how long they learn and what time they should learn.

The third aspect that I asked to the students was about students’ behavior in determining the objectives of their out-of-class writing learning. This aspect was indicated from their responses to the question about their awareness of the target

in their learning. From the interview, I could get that the students are rarely decide and have little awareness to the target that they should achieve in their learning.

The fourth aspect that was asked to the students was selecting the learning methods and techniques. From the conversation with the students in the interview, I could get that they are best in choosing their learning activity for their out-of-class English writing activity. It was indicated by their answers, such as:

“In learning and to improve my writing, usually at home or anywhere, I write some random phrases about my feeling and I provide a book for me to collect those phrases and make it became a poem. After writing the poem, I also check the grammar whether it is right or error.”

“To know how to write, I usually start my writing learning with listening to a story then I note down the story. So from that I can know how to write some sentences in correct way.”

“Usually, to know how to write some expressions, I watch movies which speaks English or which uses the subtitle in English.”

“to learn writing, I usually do write a story, but first, I write it in Bahasa Indonesia, then I translate it to English”

Those answers indicated that they choose the activity which is most suitable to them for their out-of-class English writing activity. There were some students stated that they choose making notes of their feeling in their gadget as their writing learning, some students choose reviewing the previous discussion in the class for their writing learning activity and there were also some students who never decide how they will learn writing.

The next aspect that I asked to the students was about evaluating the process and the result of their learning. Responding to the question, some students admitted that they never do evaluation to their learning. Some students said that they sometimes do it, and few students said that they do the evaluation after they learn.

The last thing that I investigated was about the activities of students' writing learning through the activities engaged with internet and social media. Some students claimed that they are active in using social media. Many of them stated that they often post pictures with caption in English, and update the status in English. Some of them admitted that because they are active Instagram users, they often open Instagram account which provides English learning materials. Many of the students admitted that they often chat in English while also learn how to write with their friends from other country in Facebook messenger or even with their campus mates in BBM.

Discussion

Holec (1981) in Chan (2016) argues that there are five requirements for autonomous learner, such as determining objectives of learning, defining the contents and progression, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring learning process, and evaluating the process and outcomes of learning. In language learning in the classroom, the five requirements are difficult to be reached by the students since the institution or the teachers already determine how the learning conducted and the students just follow the rule. The students will not become autonomous learner if they do not have an active involvement in their own learning process. Unlike the language classroom, the out-of-class language learning is suggested to give the students extensive chance to achieve the five requirements (Benson, 2011). For that reason, the students are possible to plan, select, monitor and evaluate their own learning by themselves rather than by the teacher. It will indicate that the students are actively involved in their own learning.

In addition to Holec (1981) in Hu (2014), Dickinson (1993) as cited in Ardi (2013) also believes that formulating learning objectives becomes one of the distinctive characteristics of autonomous learners. In this respect, the learning objectives have a vital role in learning process because it directs the students'

learning. Little (2009) states that the learning is more effective if the students are aware of their learning goals. Therefore, without having and determining a clear objective, it is difficult for the students to experience their learning appropriately. Based on the questionnaire results of this research, the autonomous behavior of the students in determining the objectives of their out-of-class English learning reached the medium degree (mean=3.45). It means that the students already had enough capacity in setting their target in learning even though in the interview there were still some students admitted that they were lack of awareness to their learning target.

Controlling over learning content is primary to autonomy in a sense that the students are free to decide the materials about what they want to learn in order to achieve the learning objective (Benson, 2011). To achieve their goals in learning, the students should decide and select the suitable learning materials and the pace of their learning. It means that the students may choose and select the materials for their learning which are appropriate to their level of English as well as determine the time and place in order to conduct the learning according to their own schedule. The result of the questionnaire suggested that in out-of-class English learning, the ability to decide the suitable materials for their learning and the pace of their learning was at high degree (mean=3.50). That result was different from the statements of the students in the interview which most of students admitted that they do not have schedule for their learning and many students stated that they use the material which have already provided and given by the lectures.

After determining the goal and the materials, the students should think about the methods or techniques for their learning to support them in achieving the goal (Holec, 1981 as cited in Ardi, 2013). Omaggio (1978), as cited in Ferdous (2013), also believes that autonomous learners must have good insights into their learning methods and techniques. The result from the analysis revealed that the students

had the high degree of selecting the learning methods and techniques (mean=3.90) and it was the highest degree among the other aspects. It was supported by the students' statement in the interview. In the interview, most students stated that they have various techniques to learn which they choose by themselves because they think it was the most suitable learning activity to them. Moreover, Dickinson (1993) as cited in Ardi (2013), states that autonomous learners have capability to identify what strategies fitting them best and what strategies are not appropriate with them as well. However, from the analysis, it was found that they were best in choosing the strategies for their learning among the other aspects.

Self-monitoring is so important for it enables the students to check, verify, or correct in performing the language task (Benson, 2001, cited in Ferdous, 2013) to know whether their learning is successful or not and to decide which parts must be changed and which must be continued. According to Chan (2016), the learners who are responsible for their learning consciously keep monitoring the progress of their learning. Nevertheless, the result of the analysis revealed that the students were less able to monitor their learning process and it achieved the lowest degree among the other aspects in the questionnaire. Moreover, the questionnaire result of this research suggested that the students also were less able to decide the length and time of their out-of-class learning. It was strengthened by the statements from the students which most students admitted that they never decide how long and when they should learn. Students' decision on the length and time of their learning is indeed one of the evidence of students' effort to monitor their learning process.

Furthermore, to judge how well the students are doing in carried out the task and how much they have achieved the learning, self-evaluation was used (Talkowska, 2015). An ability to self-evaluate undeniable becomes a defining characteristic of autonomous learners since the students independently asses the process and the result of their learning, instead of conducted by the teachers. The results of this research suggested that the ability of the students to evaluate the process and the

outcomes of their learning was at a high level (mean=3,62). Without a doubt, the evaluation could be also used to make the further learning better as well (item 10, mean=4.05). Nevertheless, the students statements in the interview did not show that the students have that high capacity in doing the evaluation. For that reason, it is crucial to support students' autonomy in language learning for the students themselves decide actively how well they perform the process of learning as well as appraise the weaknesses and strengths of their learning outcomes (Chik, 2015).

As to the out-of-class autonomous activities, this research revealed that the most widely-practiced activity were those which were engaged with their gadget connected to internet network and social media, such as updating status in Facebook, Instagram, twitter and Blackberry Messenger (BBM) using English, texting friends using English, etc. It goes without saying that nowadays the students are active as social media users. As a result, the students made the use of their gadget as a medium to carry out their out-of-class English Writing learning. This may prove autonomous activities and the use of internet are indeed closely related (Talkowska, 2015). In Addition, the research findings agreed with an experts' arguments (e.g. Littlewood, 1999 in liu 2014) that Asian learners tended to work together in learning. The findings of this result suggested that the students need other people to make their learning better (item 16, mean=3.71)

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Many researchers had already done the research on learners' autonomy which focused on classroom learning process, such as Guo (2011), Liu (2014), Talkowska (2015), Chan (2016), etc. Nevertheless, students' learning experiences beyond the classroom are less paid into attention. Whereas, learners' autonomy in out-of-class language learning activity is one of the important things that we should focus on language learning and still there are only view researchers doing

the research about that. That was one of the reasons why I wanted to do this research.

This research produced the knowledge about the condition of learners' autonomy in out-of-class English writing learning activity of the third semester students of English Education study program in Universitas Bandar Lampung. The result of the questionnaire implied that the students were in the medium level of learner autonomy (mean=3.20). It can be said that they already have good level of learner autonomy based on the questionnaire result, but it is still not enough regarding to the interview result. In the interview, I got that there were many students who are still not aware of their learning outside the class. It is the task of teachers to help build learners' autonomy.

Suggestion

Based on the result of this research, most students are the active users of social media and they mostly like to work with their gadget. The teachers can use this condition to build one of the ways to help the students in enhancing learning autonomy in out-of-class English writing activity.

The teachers can improve the teaching method which can lead the students being aware and being actively involved in their own learning process outside the class with their gadget. Actually, the complicated media is not needed to help the students and simple and familiar one can be used effectively to support the learning process; for instance, based on the interview result, they stated that they are used to chat with their friends in a messenger use English. Nga (2014) stated that the students can carry out their learning process easily when they work with their gadget in easy way. So, I suggest to the teacher to use the messenger which is owned by most all students and easily used to open discussion forum to train students' writing ability, for instance the group discussion in Blackberry

Messenger. The students will often use their writing skill in the discussion and automatically, it can also improve their ability in writing.

In the future, I really hope that there will be other researchers who would like to explore more about learner autonomy in out-of-class English learning activity. Remembering that there are still only few researchers conducted the research in this field, I also hope that there will be other researcher who can find some methods and provide the solution to build students' awareness of autonomy in out-of-class language learning.

The results of this study may shed important light on the curriculum development of English as foreign language learning in Indonesia. In this respect, curriculum developers are provided with a new insight into the principles of learners' autonomy in out-of-class language learning activity. It is expected that they are able to include the principles of learning autonomy in the curriculum design, particularly in sequencing learning contents and activities, which gives EFL learners an ample chance to be actively involved in the learning process beyond the classroom.

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