




Article

Learner Autonomy between Students and Teachers at a Defence University: Perception vs. Expectation

Emily Abd Rahman ^{1,2} , Melor Md Yunus ^{2,*} , Harwati Hashim ²  and Nur Khadirah Ab. Rahman ^{1,2} 

¹ Language Center, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM), Kuala Lumpur 57000, Malaysia; emily@upnm.edu.my (E.A.R.); khadirah@upnm.edu.my (N.K.A.R.)

² Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Bangi 43600, Malaysia; harwati@ukm.edu.my

* Correspondence: melor@ukm.edu.my

Abstract: The success of nurturing learner autonomy lies in the collaboration between two parties—teachers and students. A mismatch of perception and expectation of the desirable level of learner autonomy that should be given in class may lead to failure in developing learner autonomy. Hence, this paper aims to investigate if there are differences between the teachers’ and students’ perceptions of learner autonomy that is currently being practiced in ESL classrooms at a defence university in Malaysia to understand the existing level of learner autonomy in this context, as well as investigate the level of learner autonomy they expect to have in the future. A quantitative research design with descriptive approach was employed using a questionnaire to collect data from 132 students and 10 English teachers. The instrument was based on the twelve categories about learner autonomy through classroom experience and data collected were analysed using SPSS. Results show that the teachers and students are involved collaboratively in carrying learner autonomy. However, all of the significant differences pointed out a higher degree of support for learner autonomy of the students and a lower degree of support for learner autonomy of the teachers. The success of promoting learner autonomy is influenced by the teachers’ beliefs, motivation and encouragement, and also students’ capacity to be autonomous, namely ability, willingness and opportunity.

Keywords: defence university; ESL; learner autonomy; sustained learning; tertiary education



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1. Introduction

Learner autonomy has always been seen as an essential indicator of successful language learning. This claim is supported by researchers investigating learner autonomy, including [1–12]. Learner autonomy is also crucial in providing quality and equity in education, especially in fostering lifelong learning for all, as stated in the fourth goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The United Nations mentioned that this goal highlights the importance of education in sustaining industries in the future geared towards 2030 [13]. Autonomy is an aspect that needs to be considered to allow individuals to have control over decision making, to be self-directed and responsible, an important attribute for sustainability. It is empirical to nurture such ability at the tertiary level, as the students’ awareness of sustainability and the changes it implies must be trained in universities because tertiary institutions are the driving force in promoting sustainable education [14]. University graduates who are armed with a set of autonomy skills in learning are found to be able to compete in the job market in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 [15]. Having autonomous students is ideal with the emergence of 21st century learning and the 4th Industrial Revolution as students will be successful not only in language learning, but also in other subjects and aspects of life [8].

There are several definitions of learner autonomy. However, these definitions share some important traits: the earliest and widely used definition is learners taking responsibility and taking charge of their own learning [16], which includes identifying learning

goals [5], having some control on learning process or content [17], and identifying effective learning strategies [18]. Learner autonomy could be promoted in two ways, as highlighted by [11,19] which are learner autonomy outside the classroom and inside the classroom. The second aspect, which involves promoting autonomy in the classroom, could only be achieved through the teachers' teaching practices, and these practices are influenced by the teachers' teaching beliefs. As agreed by a plethora of research works, the quality and effectiveness of education is determined by the teacher [20]. The teacher's provision of opportunities for students to learn, by allowing them to formulate, restructure, select and apply suitable ways for them to attain knowledge, is vital in promoting students to become more autonomous.

Apart from teachers, students also play an important role in the success of learner autonomy [11]. A person's autonomy (student) is influenced by his or her capacity to make and carry out the choices he/she makes independently. This capacity depends on three factors, which are ability, willingness and opportunity [21,22]. For example, although given the opportunity by teachers to become autonomous, students may not be willing to be autonomous. This mismatch may influence the promotion of learner autonomy. In addition, the setting of the research is a defence university where the students live in a different environment from other public and private universities in Malaysia where the students' capacity may be different. Therefore, it is imperative for the research to investigate how much difference exists between the students' and their teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy as presently practiced, and how much of a role they expect from themselves and each other for learner autonomy in the future.

1.1. Learner Autonomy

The term learner autonomy is well-known in language teaching since the 20th century. Despite the popularity, the term often leads to a significant conceptual misunderstanding to teachers and students due to its multidimensionality, since learner autonomy is derived based on concepts from different disciplines including language, politics and philosophy [5,23,24]. However, in the domain of language teaching and learning, the root of these misconceptions comes from the term itself [25].

1.2. Learner Autonomy in Teaching and Learning

In language teaching and learning, there are two broad definitions of the term learner autonomy, which are the characteristics of being free from external constraints that render students unable to take charge of their learning, and the other definition revolves around the situation where the learner is totally free for all decisions in learning [24]. The difference in definition of terms represents different degrees of students' involvement and teachers' engagement [25]. The degrees range from having total student control, to partial student control, to indirect teacher control. The first term is more suitable to the current research as it involves students having some degree of control over their learning.

Most literature on autonomy refers to students "acquiring autonomy" or "becoming more autonomous" [26] as autonomy is a matter of degree, not an "all-or-nothing" concept. Learner autonomy should be fostered from inside the classroom as learner autonomy includes students making decisions for their own learning [24]. Therefore, all the decision making in which a student is involved in their classroom experience is reflected as being autonomous in their learning. The classroom is a context where learner autonomy is fostered and practiced. The teacher's role is not to transmit knowledge, but to create possibilities for students' own production or construction of knowledge [27]. The teacher must teach the students to have reflective habits and monitor their progress as the teacher's responsibility is to create and sustain a classroom whose "language learning is a function of its language use" [28]. The teacher needs to provide thorough care and focus on satisfying the students' social and psychological needs to achieve learner autonomy [12]. This importance of cultivating learner autonomy for language learning is realized by most teachers in the area of education [11,29–31].

1.3. Teachers' Role in Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy is a shared responsibility between teachers and students as both need to work hand in hand to create an autonomous language learning classroom. As highlighted by [9], the teachers need to assist and guide students as facilitators in the learning process because the capability to be autonomous needs to be trained to the students. Learner autonomy can be achieved by offering students information and advice so that they could make the most informed decision [32,33]. Teachers also have a very important role in the development of learner autonomy because they can provide the proper motivation and encouragement for student to be more responsible and independent in learning [34]. The students' motivation can be improved by providing a safe context for support and guidance [35]. The extent of how much learner autonomy is promoted in a classroom depends on the teachers' beliefs of autonomy and what is desirable and feasible in certain contexts [9]. Apart from that, the teachers' beliefs of the effectiveness of a method as an agent of change can also influence the other members of the teaching and learning community to be accepting towards the method [36]. Therefore, it is important for teachers to have a positive belief of learner autonomy to ensure the promotion of learner autonomy to happen in the classroom and that the community in the institution also accepts it.

1.4. Students' Role in Learner Autonomy

Although teachers have a significant role in promoting learner autonomy, students also play a vital role in this matter [10,11]. It is the student who is most responsible for autonomous learning [24]. It is necessary for students to take up the roles to be a good student, a responsible student and finally an aware student [16]. With these roles, the students would become very active and engaged in their learning. The student must take up more responsibility towards their learning, guided by the teacher's suggestions and facilitation. In this sense, students have more freedom in the selection of every aspect of learning and, at the same time, have greater responsibilities to be accomplished. However, it is vital to incorporate the notion of capacity (ability, willingness and opportunity) in learner autonomy [21,22]. The capacity of autonomous learning is developed by practice and needs to be nurtured and maintained [34].

Ability refers to knowledge and skills that helps an individual to be able to make choices [22]. Students are unable to become autonomous when they have low understanding of the importance of learner autonomy, insufficient skills to learn independently, and unfamiliarity with the idea of taking responsibility for their learning [37]. Students who are aware and equipped with knowledge of their learning process, have a better chance to become more autonomous in their learning [38].

Willingness refers to motivation and confidence that helps an individual to take responsibility for the choices required [22]. Studies found that students who are more willing to perform autonomous acts are more likely to acquire learner autonomy [39,40]. Ref [10] study also highlights the students' lack of motivation also prevents teachers from promoting learner autonomy even when they believe it is important for language learning.

Opportunity refers to the material, social, and psychological constraints that a person is subjected to, which permits him from taking charge of his own learning [21]. Social factors may have a significant effect on the promotion of learner autonomy. Research shows that social influence is a significant factor affecting the adoption or acceptance of a new system or method [41,42]. Sociocultural factors are one of the things that can prevent learners from becoming autonomous despite having the proper ability and willingness, as their opportunity to become autonomous is affected by their thoughts and behaviours of what learning should be [43]. Students with hindrance from sociocultural factors may inhibit learner autonomy if they were placed in a different environment with the proper support and intervention that provides them the opportunity to become autonomous [44]. This notion is also supported by a study by [45] as the findings showed that most teachers in China understood the features and importance of learner autonomy. However, the

real implementation was inhibited by various contextual challenges regarding students, teachers, the institution, and even due to the Chinese culture.

The three factors have a significant influence in a person's capacity to become autonomous. The absence of one or more of the three factors could render the students from becoming autonomous in their learning. The presence of all three factors, on the other hand, could lead to a high degree of capacity for students to become autonomous. A study by [24] showed that Master-level students in a university in Nepal possessed a very high level of learner autonomy because the students had the ability, willingness and opportunity to take charge of their learning. Another study by [10] discovered that most university English language teachers in Saudi Arabia were less successful in promoting it in the classroom due to absence of opportunity (societal and curricular aspects), ability and willingness (student aspects). These studies demonstrate the importance of the three factors, which contribute to students' capacity to become autonomous.

1.5. Learner Autonomy and Context of Study

The context of this study is Malaysia's only military university that is specially tailored for the needs and development of the Malaysian Armed Forces. The university is a boutique university, different from the public and private universities in Malaysia as the students live in a military surrounding. Students have to go through academic and military training concurrently and have to be excellent in both [46]. A previous study conducted on the defence university teachers' perspectives of learner autonomy indicated that the teachers had a positive view of the contribution learner autonomy has on language learning but promoting learner autonomy in this environment was viewed as relatively challenging since the lifestyle of these students is different from other universities [47]. However, the study did not focus on teachers' perceptions and expectations of how much autonomy should be given according to the classroom experiences and it did not include the students' perception on learner autonomy.

A mismatch of beliefs between teachers and students, for example in [48] where the teachers claimed that their students participated in autonomous learning activities to a moderate extent, whereas the students claimed to engage in them at a high level may lead to the failure of inculcating learner autonomy. There should be an aligned agreement between the two on the degree of learner autonomy appropriate for the class. One way of finding out the appropriate or desirable degree of autonomy between the two groups is by examining the teachers' and students' perceptions and expectations towards each other's roles, by referring to their classroom experiences.

2. Materials and Methods

The goals of this study were to find out the degree of autonomy that the defence students and teachers are practicing now and the difference of expectations between the two groups. To deal with those goals, the research design used in this study was a descriptive research design.

Our convenient sample comprised students and teachers from a defence university situated in Malaysia. The participants were 132 students who were either in their first or second year of degree program and 10 English teachers. The students were from different faculties but all of them were taking an English course at the time when the research took place. English is one of the core subjects that had to be taken by every student in the university. The English teachers, on the other hand, were all involved in teaching both first year and second year students. Participants completed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire with the presence of the researcher and the teachers in charge of the class. The identity of the respondents remained anonymous. The teachers were also required to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire.

There were 35 questions in the questionnaire and they were divided into two sections. The first part (Part One) has 11 questions revolving around the participants' demographic information. Part Two consists of 24 questions (questions 12 to 35—refer to Table A1 in

Appendix A). The even-numbered questions were designed to find out participants' present perceptions towards learner autonomy that was practiced at that time. The odd-numbered questions were designed to investigate participants' expectations on the degree of learner autonomy that they hope to be applied in the future. The even and odd-numbered questions were based on the twelve categories about learner autonomy through classroom experience. The categories were originally used in a survey by the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, Austria in 1997 to find out teachers' perspectives regarding learner autonomy. The questionnaire was distributed in several European countries including Slovenia, Poland, Netherlands, Malta, Estonia and Belorussia [49]. [50] modified the questionnaire by extending it to be used with students as well, to obtain a two-sided opinion. This extended version by [50] was edited to fit the context of this study. The reliability and validity were considered in designing the questionnaire. Face validity was tested with five English teachers and seven students who were not part of the sample to ensure that the test is appropriate for the intended audience. The content validity was vetted by two experts in the area of ESL to ensure that the instrument measures the intended content area it supposed to measure. The reliability was established by conducting a pilot study with 30 students and the data were analysed using SPSS for internal consistency. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.871, indicating high internal consistency.

The questions offered respondents to express five degrees of agreement or disagreement with the topic of each category, namely, *Not at all*, *Little*, *Partly*, *Much*, and *Very much*. Based on [49,50], the first two entries were interpreted as expression of neglect or resistance to the notion of promoting or developing learner autonomy in the stated classroom activity. An entry in the *Partly* column was interpreted as a desire for the stated activity to be a result of collaboration and negotiation between the teacher and the students. The last two choices, *Much*, and *Very much* were interpreted as having a strong belief in the importance of giving the students as much power as possible in influencing the given task. Figure 1 illustrates how the interpretation should be based on the mean reading because the results will be presented in mean and standard deviation.

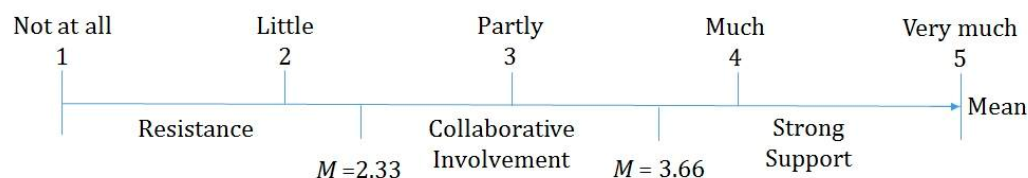


Figure 1. Scale for interpretation of mean.

The scale suggested by learner autonomy scholars, [49,50], as shown in Figure 1 is used to interpret the results of this research. The mean reading below 2.33 indicates resistance towards learner autonomy, mean a reading between 2.33 and 3.67 indicates collaborative involvement between teacher and student, and mean reading over 3.67 indicates strong support towards learner autonomy.

3. Results

The result is presented according to the twelve categories of classroom experiences. There are goals of the course, course content, selecting materials, time and pace, teaching method, learning tasks, classroom management, record-keeping, homework tasks, what is to be learned, learning procedures, and assessment with guidelines. The mean and standard deviation from both groups of respondents were used for comparison. Discrepancy was considered significant when a difference of mean score between students and their teachers was more than ± 0.25 as an arbitrary guideline for interpretation.

Table 1 summarizes the 12 categories of classroom experience. Generally, in 11 categories, students believed they had and expected for a higher degree of learner autonomy in class. However, in deciding the goals of the course, students expect to have a lower degree of learner autonomy than their teachers wanted them to, but only by a difference of

−0.03 in perception and −0.21 in expectation. The differences will be elaborated further according to each category in the following paragraphs. The significant discrepancies when differences in the mean were more than ± 0.25 will also be reported and later summarized in Table 2.

Table 1. Result for the mean of twelve classroom experiences.

No	Category		Students (S)		Teachers (T)		Differences
			M	SD	M	SD	
1	Goals of the course	Perception	3.17	0.71	3.20	0.92	−0.03
		Expectation	3.69	0.73	3.90	0.99	−0.21
2	Course content	Perception	3.18	0.83	2.70	1.25	0.45
		Expectation	3.55	0.87	3.30	1.25	0.25
3	Selecting materials	Perception	3.29	0.80	2.50	0.71	0.79
		Expectation	3.66	0.83	3.20	0.92	0.46
4	Time and pace	Perception	3.05	0.75	3.00	0.67	0.05
		Expectation	3.59	0.83	3.30	0.95	0.29
5	Teaching method	Perception	3.27	0.87	2.40	0.84	0.87
		Expectation	3.64	0.82	2.80	0.42	0.84
6	Learning tasks	Perception	3.21	0.83	2.80	1.03	0.41
		Expectation	3.60	0.77	3.00	1.05	0.60
7	Classroom management	Perception	3.11	0.84	3.00	1.05	0.11
		Expectation	3.53	0.85	3.20	1.14	0.33
8	Record-keeping	Perception	3.18	0.94	2.90	1.37	0.28
		Expectation	3.64	0.91	3.20	1.32	0.44
9	Homework tasks	Perception	3.33	0.81	3.20	1.40	0.13
		Expectation	3.55	0.86	3.40	1.35	0.15
10	What to be learned	Perception	3.31	0.87	2.40	1.17	0.91
		Expectation	3.70	0.88	3.10	1.20	0.60
11	Learning procedures	Perception	3.43	0.79	3.10	1.20	0.33
		Expectation	3.77	0.82	3.40	1.35	0.37
12	Assessment with guidelines	Perception	3.27	0.86	2.70	0.67	0.57
		Expectation	3.70	0.75	3.30	1.06	0.40

Table 2. Summary of the results of twelve classroom experiences.

No	Category		Students (S)	Teachers (T)	Significant Difference (±0.25)
			Degree of Learner Autonomy		
1	Goals of the course	Perception	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	X
		Expectation	Strong support	Strong support	X
2	Course content	Perception	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
		Expectation	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
3	Selecting materials	Perception	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
		Expectation	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
4	Time and pace	Perception	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	X
		Expectation	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓

Table 2. Cont.

No	Category		Students (S)	Teachers (T)	Significant Difference (±0.25)
			Degree of Learner Autonomy		
5	Teaching method	Perception	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
		Expectation	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
6	Learning tasks	Perception	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
		Expectation	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
7	Classroom management	Perception	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	X
		Expectation	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
8	Record-keeping	Perception	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
		Expectation	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
9	Homework tasks	Perception	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	X
		Expectation	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	X
10	What to be learned	Perception	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
		Expectation	Strong support	Collaborative involvement	✓
11	Learning procedures	Perception	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
		Expectation	Strong support	Collaborative involvement	✓
12	Assessment with guidelines	Perception	Collaborative involvement	Collaborative involvement	✓
		Expectation	Strong support	Collaborative involvement	✓

Results for the goals of the course show that teachers had a slightly higher perception and expectation compared to the students. Overall, both groups had a similar perception and expectation of learner autonomy in terms of determining the goals of the course. The current degree of learner autonomy practiced in class was agreed by both groups to be a collaborative involvement ($M = 3.17$ for students and $M = 3.20$ for teachers) and both groups show a higher mean in the future ($M = 3.67$ for students and $M = 3.90$ for teachers) with mean difference of -0.03 for perception and -0.21 for expectation. This indicates that both students and teachers agreed to provide a higher support for learner autonomy in terms of deciding the goals of the course. The differences between teachers' and students' perception and expectations were not significant because they were not more than ± 0.25 . This means the students and teachers have a similar idea on the degree of learner autonomy that should be practiced in terms of determining the goals of the course.

In terms of determining the course content, both groups agreed that they were currently in a collaborative involvement in determining the course content of the class as the range of mean were between 2.33 and 3.67 ($M = 3.18$ for students and $M = 2.70$ for teachers). However, the students had a significantly higher degree of learner autonomy compared to the teachers in terms of their perception where the difference is 0.45. The students and teachers felt that the degree of autonomy should stay in this state in the future ($M = 3.55$ for students and $M = 3.30$ for teachers). In terms of expectation, the students also showed a significant higher mean with the difference of 0.25 for expectation. This result indicates that, in determining the course of the content, students are motivated to have more autonomy, but the teachers are less agreeable in this matter. Teachers may think that students are not well-equipped in terms of knowledge to decide the course content.

In the selection of materials used in the class, there is a significant difference between the students' and teachers' mean score for both perception (M difference = 0.79) and expectations (M difference = 0.46). Students believed that they had a higher degree of autonomy over the choice of materials as currently practiced ($M = 3.29$ for students and $M = 2.50$ for teachers) and hoped to have more power in the future, as compared to the teachers ($M = 3.66$ for students and $M = 3.20$ for teachers). Although students had a significantly higher mean score compared to teachers, both groups agreed that the selection of materials should be a collaborative involvement between the two parties as indicated by the mean scores (collaborative involvement $M = 2.33$ to 3.67). They also supported having

more learner autonomy in the future but still in the range of collaborative involvement, not more than that.

For time and pace of the lesson, students and teachers had very similar perceptions of the degree of autonomy currently practiced in this category ($M = 3.05$ for students and $M = 3.00$ for teachers). However, there was a significant difference between the students' and teachers' expectations with a mean difference of 0.29 ($M = 3.59$ for students and $M = 3.30$ for teachers). Students expected to have more learner autonomy in this category in the future. Both teachers and students had a similar opinion that the degree of autonomy should be in the range of collaborative involvement between them with a mean score between 2.33 and 3.67.

When it comes to deciding the teaching method in class including the classroom activities and whether activities should be conducted in pairs or in group work, teachers had a significantly lower mean score compared to students for both perception ($M = 3.27$ for students and $M = 2.40$ for teachers) and expectation ($M = 3.64$ for students and $M = 2.80$ for teachers). The mean difference was 0.87 for perception and 0.84 for expectation. However, all of the mean scores indicated that the teachers and students believed that this category should be a collaborative involvement. The difference was in the skewedness of their mean scores. The teachers thought that the collaboration should be more towards the teachers' control, but students thought that they should have more power.

In determining the learning tasks of the English class, students significantly had higher perception ($M = 3.21$ for students and $M = 2.80$ for teachers) and expectation ($M = 3.60$ for students and $M = 3.00$ for teachers) of being involved in this category, compared to teachers, with mean differences of 0.41 for perception and 0.60 for expectation. Both groups of respondents agreed that there should be a collaborative involvement in determining the learning tasks of the class.

For classroom management such as seating arrangements and discipline, students and their teachers had a similar perception of the degree of autonomy currently practiced in this category ($M = 3.11$ for students and $M = 3.00$ for teachers). However, students showed a significantly higher expectation of learner autonomy in this category in the future with mean difference of 0.33 ($M = 3.53$ for students and $M = 3.20$ for teachers). Both groups agreed that this category is currently practiced as a collaborative involvement and that it should stay that way in the future, but with more responsibility towards the students.

For record-keeping, including keeping records of work done, attendance and marks, students indicated a significantly higher mean score for both perception ($M = 3.18$ for students and $M = 2.90$ for teachers) and expectation ($M = 3.64$ for students and $M = 3.20$ for teachers) for this category with mean difference of 0.28 for perception and 0.44 for expectation. Both teachers and students felt that determination of record-keeping should be a collaboration between the two groups.

In making decisions on homework including the quantity, type and frequency of homework, there was no significant difference between teachers and students as the mean difference was less than ± 0.25 . Both groups agreed that determining the homework tasks should be a collaborative involvement. This indicates that both parties have a similar idea of the degree of autonomy that is currently being practiced and should be practiced in the future in making decisions on the homework in the class.

For the category of what is to be learned in the class, students had a significantly higher perception ($M = 3.31$ for students and $M = 2.40$ for teachers) and expectation ($M = 3.70$ for students and $M = 3.10$ for teachers) for this category with mean difference of 0.91, which is the highest significant difference for perception and 0.60 for expectation. For both groups, this category was currently a collaborative involvement in the class. However, in the future, students claimed that they wanted more power in determining what to be learned in the class as suggested by the mean score of 3.70 (which is above $M = 3.67$, indicating a strong support for learner autonomy).

In terms of learning procedures including planning/monitoring and evaluating, students indicated a significantly higher mean score compared to the teachers in both per-

ception ($M = 3.43$ for students and $M = 3.10$ for teachers) and expectation ($M = 3.77$ for students and $M = 3.40$ for teachers) with mean difference of 0.33 for perception and 0.37 for expectation. Both groups believed that deciding the learning procedure was currently a collaborative involvement as the mean score for perception was between 2.33 and 3.67. However, in the future, students expected to have more involvement in learning procedure with mean score 3.77, indicating a strong support towards learner autonomy.

In assessment with guidelines, the mean score suggested that students had significantly higher perception ($M = 3.27$ for students and $M = 2.70$ for teachers) and expectation ($M = 3.70$ for students and $M = 3.30$ for teachers) of learner autonomy in terms of having assessment with their own guidelines with mean difference of 0.57 for perception and 0.40 for expectation. Both students and teachers agreed that having students assess themselves using their own guidelines was currently a collaborative involvement between the two. However, students desired to be more independent in this category in the future with a mean more than 3.67 for expectation, indicating a strong support for learner autonomy.

Table 2 summarizes the results of the questionnaire in terms the students' and teachers' perceptions and expectations of the degree of learner autonomy whether there is a resistance, a collaborative involvement or a strong support in the class. This table also shows the summary of whether there is any significant difference between the students' and teachers' perceptions and expectations of the level of learner autonomy that is currently practiced and should be practiced in the future. Out of the twelve classroom experiences, only one category is agreed by both students and teachers to be practiced at a high level of learner autonomy, which is in determining the goals of the lesson where both sides show a strong support towards learner autonomy in terms of their expectation. Apart from that category, students also show strong supports toward learner autonomy in terms of their expectation of three categories, which are what to learn, learning procedures, and assessment with guidelines. The rest of the categories (in terms of perception and expectation) were agreed by both parties to be a collaborative involvement in terms of the degree of learner autonomy. Although most of the results indicate that students and teachers agreed that learner autonomy should be in the range of collaborative involvement, the difference between the means were mostly significant, indicating that there exist contradicting views towards the degree of learner autonomy that is currently practiced and should be practiced in class. Though students and teachers thought that learner autonomy should be a collaboration between both parties, students' perceptions and expectations are more skewed towards stronger support for autonomy while the teachers' perception and expectation are more skewed towards resistance of learner autonomy.

4. Discussion

The findings suggest that teachers and students in the defence university have a similar degree of perception and expectation of learner autonomy that should be practiced in class based on the twelve classroom experiences. Both groups thought that overall, the degree of autonomy should be a balance between the teachers and students, a collaborative involvement [49]. Although most of the twelve classroom categories were agreed to be a collaborative involvement, results also show that almost all of the categories show significant differences in terms of the mean (± 0.25). All of the significant differences pointed out a higher degree of support for learner autonomy by students and a lower support for learner autonomy by teachers. This may indicate that the teachers and students are still in the midst of adapting the idea of learner autonomy in the university. Students may still be in the training stage towards becoming more autonomous, and teachers believed that they are not ready to be fully autonomous yet as they still need guidance by the teachers. The teachers' assistance and guidance in the learning process is crucial because the ability to be autonomous needs to be taught to the students [9].

Another explanation for the significant difference would be the notion of students' capacity (ability, willingness and opportunity) in learner autonomy [21,22]. This capacity needs to be nurtured through practice over time [34]. Without this ability, which is the

proper knowledge and skills to make choices [22], students will not be able to become autonomous [37]. The students from the defence university may not have the full ability to become autonomous, although they are highly motivated to be more independent in their learning. Students may not understand fully what it means to be autonomous, and they may not have the proper skills to be in control especially in terms of deciding what is to be learned, the teaching method to be used in class and selection of the best materials to be used in class. These three categories had the highest significant differences amongst the twelve classroom experiences.

The results for students' willingness, which refer to their motivation to become more responsible [22], show that students are highly motivated based on the high mean scores from all the categories. High motivation helps teachers to better promote learner autonomy in language learning [10]. In the research, the students voted for learner autonomy as a collaborative involvement or they showed a high support towards the implementation of learner autonomy. The students' high motivation to be more autonomous in class would most likely escalate the process for the students to acquire learner autonomy [39,40].

Students' opportunity, on the other hand, may also contribute to the results. The place where the research took place is a defence university, where military pedagogy is implemented in the teaching. This is important in order to make sure defence university graduates have the attributes of intellectual leaders of character [46]. The students and teachers may still be in the negotiating period of the proper level of learner autonomy that should be incorporated as there needs to be a balance between students making their own decision and students following orders. As found in previous research, social factors may affect the integration of a new system or method [41,42] and sociocultural factors may play a role in preventing the promotion of learner autonomy [43–45]. Although students have the ability and willingness to become autonomous, but without the proper opportunity, they will not be able to become autonomous. A good environment with the proper support and intervention [44], and careful attention to students' basic social and psychological needs [12], can provide them with the opportunity to become autonomous.

5. Conclusions

In the promotion of learner autonomy, the educational institutions, teachers and students should focus on the three factors affecting a person's capacity to have learner autonomy, namely ability, willingness and opportunity. In order for students to have learner autonomy, they need to have the skills and knowledge to engage in independent learning, motivation and confidence to perform independent choices and also provision of supporting material, social and psychological settings to encourage them to engage in independent behaviours. Fostering learner autonomy should be a collaboration between the students and teachers.

In terms of ability, the teacher could equip the students with ample skills and techniques to help encourage independent learning. Workshops and tutorials during the first year of study are good ways to inculcate those abilities to the students. In terms of willingness, the teachers could include meaningful activities in their teaching. When teachers relate the students' English learning experiences with their life situation, especially in terms of work, they will have a clearer goal and thus will be more motivated. Apart from that, the university and the teacher should work together in providing a conducive and friendly environment for students to freely use English. The provision of this opportunity will enable students to become more autonomous because they are not held back by social and psychological constraints.

Future research should explore whether demographic variables influence student feedback and needs over time. A rigorous methodology is recommended to avoid the shortcomings in the studies already conducted in this area. These recommendations may provide a clearer picture to fully understand the social, psychological and sociocultural constraints that students experience which had affected the results.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Items for the student questionnaire.

No	Question
12.	So far, how much have you been involved in establishing the goals in your English class?
13.	In next semester, how much do you like to be involved in establishing the goals of your English class?
14.	So far, how much have you been involved in deciding the course content of your English class such as topics and tasks?
15.	In next semester, how much do you like to be involved in deciding the course content of your English class such as topics and tasks?
16.	So far, how much have you been involved in selecting materials for your English class?
17.	In next semester, how much do you like to be involved in selecting materials for your English class?
18.	So far, how much have you been involved in decisions on the time allocation and pace of the lesson?
19.	In next semester, how much do you like to be involved in decisions on the time allocation and pace of the lesson?
20.	So far, how much have you been involved in decisions on the methodology of the lesson such as type of classroom activities and individual/pair/group work?
21.	In next semester, how much do you like to be involved in decisions on the methodology of the lesson such as type of classroom activities and individual/pair/group work?
22.	So far, how much have you been involved in decisions on the choice of learning tasks?
23.	In next semester, how much do you like to be involved in decisions on the choice of learning tasks?
24.	So far, how much have you been involved in decisions on classroom management such as seating and discipline matters?
25.	In next semester, how much do you like to be involved in decisions on classroom management such as seating and discipline matters?
26.	So far, how much have you been involved in decisions about record-keeping of your work done, attendance, and marks gained?
27.	In next semester, how much do you like to be involved in decisions about record-keeping of your work done, attendance, and marks gained?
28.	So far, how much have you been involved in decisions on homework tasks such as quantity, type, and frequency?
29.	In next semester, how much do you like to be involved in decisions on homework tasks such as quantity, type, and frequency?
30.	So far, how much have you been involved in decisions on what is to be learned from materials given by the teacher such as texts and audio-visual aids?
31.	In next semester, how much do you like to be involved in decisions on what is to be learned from materials given by the teacher such as texts and audio-visual aids?
32.	So far, how much have you been encouraged to find out learning procedures by yourself, i.e., planning, monitoring, problem-solving, and evaluating?
33.	In next semester, how much do you like to be encouraged to find out learning procedures by yourself, i.e., planning, monitoring, problem-solving, and evaluating?
34.	So far, how much have you been encouraged to assess yourself by your own guidelines, rather than be tested by the teacher?
35.	In next semester, how much do you like to be encouraged to assess yourself by your own guidelines, rather than be tested by the teacher?

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