

Afghan EFL learners' perceptions of readiness for autonomous learning

HASHMATULLAH TAREEN
ATTAULLAH MUHAMMADI
MOHAMMAD TAHIR HAAND
Kandahar University

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ABSTRACT: In undergraduate education, autonomous learning is widely regarded as a desirable goal because it adheres to learner-centered approaches and promotes lifelong learning. However, relatively few empirical studies have been conducted on autonomous learning practices in Afghanistan. This study aimed to investigate how EFL learners perceive autonomous learning and their readiness for autonomous learning. The study also aimed to explore the relationship between autonomous learning and readiness and the differences among educational levels. A quantitative approach was used to achieve these objectives. The data were collected utilizing a questionnaire, and 244 EFL learners were recruited at Kandahar University, which is classified as a public university. Inferential and descriptive statistics were conducted using SPSS v24. The findings revealed positive attitudes toward autonomous learning among EFL learners. However, they did not seem ready to be autonomous in certain areas. For example, learners seem reliant on their lecturers. Additionally, the findings indicated no significant difference among educational levels. Practical implications are presented for the Ministry of Higher Education and EFL lecturers in light of the findings.

Keywords: autonomous learning, readiness, EFL learners, perceptions

Percepciones de los estudiantes afganos de inglés como lengua extranjera sobre su preparación para el aprendizaje autónomo

RESUMEN: En la enseñanza universitaria, el aprendizaje autónomo está ampliamente considerado como un objetivo deseable porque se adhiere a los enfoques centrados en el alumno y promueve el aprendizaje permanente. Sin embargo, se han realizado relativamente pocos estudios empíricos sobre las prácticas de aprendizaje autónomo en Afganistán. El objetivo de este estudio era investigar cómo perciben los alumnos de EFL el aprendizaje autónomo, así como su disposición para el aprendizaje autónomo. El estudio también pretendía descubrir la relación entre el aprendizaje autónomo y la preparación, así como la diferencia entre sus niveles educativos. Para alcanzar estos objetivos, se utilizó un enfoque cuantitativo. Los datos se recogieron mediante un cuestionario y se reclutaron 244 estudiantes de EFL de la Universidad de Kandahar, clasificada como universidad pública. Se utilizó el programa SPSS v24 para realizar estadísticas inferenciales y descriptivas. Los resultados revelaron actitudes positivas hacia el aprendizaje autónomo entre los estudiantes de EFL. Sin embargo, no parecían estar preparados para ser autónomos en determinadas áreas. Por ejemplo, parecían depender de sus profesores. Los resultados tampoco indicaron diferencias significativas entre los distintos niveles educativos. Además, se encontró una correlación positiva y signi-

ficativa entre el aprendizaje autónomo y la preparación para la autonomía. A la luz de estos resultados, se plantean implicaciones prácticas para el Ministerio de Educación Superior y para los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje autónomo, Preparación, EFL el aprendizaje, percepciones

1. INTRODUCTION

The roles of lecturers and students have changed since the advent of autonomous learning almost thirty years ago, in which the lecturers are no longer in front of knowledge and the learners are no longer passive learners (Tamer, 2013). In addition, the concept of autonomous learning has played a vital role in foreign language education for several years (Sifakis et al., 2006). In recent years, the subject of learner autonomy has attracted much attention in the field of EFL (English as a foreign language) teaching and learning (Ali & Alam, 2023). Learning English has played a very significant role for non-native speakers. Holec (1979, p. 3), who is considered the father of autonomous learning, introduced the term ‘learner autonomy’, which refers to the ability to take charge of one’s education.

Additionally, a variety of teaching and learning approaches that focused primarily on students engaging with one another as language users were made possible by constructivism and social constructivism theories in the 1970s. Constructivism encourages forms of autonomy where people make their own decisions about what and how to learn (Benson, 2001). Such comprehension of learner autonomy preparation might direct curriculum creation, material modification, classroom activities, and teacher training (Yildirim, 2008). The constructivism theory of learning emphasizes the importance of the learner rather than the lecturer by encouraging learners to construct their own conceptualizations and to find solutions to problems in the process of learning (Qi, 2012). Similarly, the principle of constructivist theories of learning lies in the idea that learners should discover and transform complicated information on their own if they are to adopt it as their own knowledge and assimilate it into their schemes. Constructivism is a view of learning based on the belief that knowledge is not a thing that can be simply given by the lecturer at the front of the room to learners at their desks. Rather, knowledge is created by learners through an active, mental process of development; learners are the builders and creators of meaning and knowledge. Accordingly, a constructivist classroom should be learner-centered, and the teacher should provide students with experiences that permit them to hypothesize, predict, manipulate objects, pose questions, research, investigate, imagine, and invent (Wang, 2011). When students attempt to increase their capacity to assume responsibility for their learning process, readiness and awareness are necessary (Yildirim, 2008; Abdel Razeq, 2018).

Autonomous learning, a well-known theory for learning the English language, is currently prioritized by many non-English speaking nations (Ali & Alam, 2023; Tareen, 2025). However, the majority of classes in Afghanistan are teacher-centered, and students choose to become accustomed to lecture-based instruction at universities. According to Orfan et al. (2021), teacher-centered instructional approaches have been employed for a long time. As a result, these learners lack intellectual initiative and are inclined to prefer traditional learning over creative learning. Consequently, it could be argued that learners are less ready and capable of acting autonomously at tertiary levels than their Western counterparts.

From what has been discussed, it is noted that there is a limited amount of research available about Afghan EFL learners in higher education who become autonomous learners. Specifically, little is known about how Afghan EFL learners perceive their readiness for autonomous learning. Therefore, this study is significant in its scope and context. In this study, the researcher aimed to investigate how Afghan EFL students see autonomous learning in their studies of the English language and their readiness for autonomous learning. It also investigates how these EFL learners' assessments of their readiness for autonomy relate to their autonomous learning. Additionally, this study aimed to explore the differences among the grades. This research attempts to address the research questions below:

1. What are EFL learners' perceptions of autonomous learning?
2. What are EFL learners' perceptions of readiness for autonomous learning?
3. Is there any significant difference in readiness for autonomous learning among freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Autonomous Learning in the EFL Context

Prior studies have shown that research on autonomous learning in English-language learning has been conducted. For example, Ba (2018) discovered that, concerning autonomous learning, most learners in autonomous learning were aware of their goals and plans but were unable to practice and carry them out because they were not autonomous learners and were completely dependent on their lecturers. Additionally, most learners were unable to use the English language outside the classroom. With respect to autonomous learning, Al-Khawlani (2018) carried out a comparative study and reported that goal-oriented EFL learners seemed to have greater views about it as well as better planning and autonomy. The author further stated that EFL students value autonomous learning and believe that it helps them accomplish their learning objectives. According to Abdel Razeq's (2014) findings on EFL learners' views on autonomous learning, lecturers are seen as responsible for the majority of their learning and favor spoon-feeding instructional approaches. In a similar vein, Almusharraf (2018) examined the attitudes of EFL learners, who demonstrated a substantial preference for autonomous learning activities both inside and outside of the classroom, but only in cases where their lecturers encouraged such activities. Bozkurt and Arslan (2018), however, found that EFL learners had unfavorable opinions about autonomous learning.

2.2. EFL Learners' Readiness for Autonomous Learning

Language learners' readiness for autonomous learning has been studied by some researchers (Chan, 2001; Bozkurt & Arslan, 2018; Wejira, 2019; Cirocki et al., 2019). Although some of these studies concluded that EFL learners were positive regarding autonomous learning, they were not practically ready to act autonomously for a variety of reasons. For example, Wejira (2019) found that EFL learners lacked the ability to be responsible for their learning and were not keen to participate in cooperative learning activities. Similarly, Cirocki et al.

(2019) indicated that EFL students heavily relied on their professors and were not ready to take charge of the classroom environment. Additionally, they opposed “being involved actively in the learning process. The researchers further stated that EFL students were not ready to choose learning objectives and materials for in-class or at-home activities. Bozkurt and Arslan (2018) indicated that students lacked support and encouragement. Therefore, they were not ready to be autonomous learners. For EFL learners to become ready for autonomous learning, Mustapha and Mahmoud (2019) identified that EFL teachers must adapt their instructional methods and appreciate the benefits of autonomous learning.

However, Chan (2001) revealed that although learners’ self-confidence in carrying out tasks autonomously was moderate, they perceived themselves as highly prepared for autonomous learning. Additionally, a study conducted by Alzubi et al. (2017) on the preparedness of EFL learners revealed that they were content with being in control of their learning. However, these students were not cognitively sensitive enough to take charge of their own English language acquisition both within and outside of the classroom. Additionally, Bozkurt and Arslan (2018) investigated EFL learners’ perceptions of autonomous learning and readiness for autonomous learning; that is, learners need to be reinforced with the necessary skills and knowledge to eliminate undesirable beliefs about autonomy. Since their views and readiness are correlated, they would therefore most likely raise their views. More specifically, EFL learners would probably become more prepared for autonomous learning only after their perceptions of autonomous learning improved.

Likewise, according to Asiri and Shukri’s (2020) study, female EFL learners demonstrated readiness for autonomous language acquisition. These students, however, struggled to grasp the idea. This finding indicates that because of learners’ excessive reliance on their lecturers, they were not yet ready to function as autonomous learners. Similarly, Genç (2015) and Duong and Nguyen (2023) found that students were ready to pursue relevant approaches and strategies. However, they seem to need assistance in detecting and overcoming barriers in their learning process to become autonomous learners. Additionally, Tareen et al. (2024) found in a carried-out study that EFL learners had positive attitudes toward autonomous learning and were ready to take the lead by creating learning goals for their learning, evaluating their learning, and participating in inside and outside classroom activities to increase their language competence. However, even though the aforementioned studies looked at how students in different countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe perceive and practice autonomous learning, there is still a dearth of research on this subject, especially in the Afghan context.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Population and Sampling

According to Cresswell (2012, p. 142), a population is a collection of people who share a certain attribute. All of the targeted participants in this case study were English-related majors (EFL learners) from Kandahar University’s Faculties of Education and Languages and Literature, where their viewpoints were uncovered. The participants were selected on the basis of sex, educational level, and age category (Table 2 presents detailed demographic information). Among the overall population of 693 EFL students, 244 (male & female) were

randomly selected, and each participant had an equal chance of selection (Clark & Creswell, 2008). For a population of 693 subjects, Barlett et al. (2001) recommend a sample size of 244 subjects. All members of the random sample were selected randomly and purely by chance (Bhardwaj, 2019).

3.2. Instruments

Three questionnaires were administered in the current study: the first one included participant’s demographic profile. The second questionnaire concerned participants’ beliefs about autonomous learning in the context of higher education. This questionnaire was adapted from Tran (2020). Initially, Tran utilized this questionnaire to assess the significance of and interest in autonomous English vocabulary learning. However, the researcher utilized it with minor changes to investigate EFL learners’ beliefs about how EFL learners perceive autonomous learning in general. It consists of two key domains: a cognitive component containing 8 items (e.g., “Autonomous learning plays an important role in English language learning” & “Autonomous learning is necessary for English language learning”) and an affective component containing 4 items (e.g., “I find it interesting to learn English autonomously” & “I find it enjoyable to learn English autonomously”). The third questionnaire, which was validated and adapted from Cirocki et al. (2019), was used to measure learner readiness. This questionnaire was initially used for Indonesian EFL students enrolled in 12th-grade urban and suburban schools. The researcher used this questionnaire because it was validated and reliable for assessing EFL learners’ readiness for autonomous learning. Each subject recorded a response on a four-point Likert scale ranging from “(1) strongly agree”, “(2) agree”, “(3) disagree”, or “(4) strongly disagree”.

3.3. Questionnaire Reliability

As shown in Table 1, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was calculated and ranged from .70 to .80, which indicates that the three categories were satisfactory. In addition to Cronbach’s alpha coefficient reliability, the researcher also performed McDonald’s Omega coefficient (ω). According to Bonniga and Saraswathi (2020), McDonald’s Omega offers a more precise degree of confidence in the consistency of the regulation of a scale.

Table 1. Reliability of the Questionnaire

CATEGORIES	ITEMS	ALPHA	ω
Cognitive Component	8	.75	76
Behavioral Component	4	.70	70
Readiness	15	.80	80

3.4. Data Collection and Ethical Issues

Social research that addresses people’s beliefs, values, and lives involves important ethical considerations (Lutabingwa & Nethonzhe, 2006). Before data collection, approval

was obtained from the university, dean of the faculty, and the head of the department since this study involved EFL learners. During class, 244 EFL learners completed a questionnaire. Before the questionnaire was distributed, the lecturers were notified upon consent, and a brief introduction was given to the learners about the survey. Under the supervision of a lecturer, the questionnaire was implemented in all classes during the 8th week of the first semester of the academic year (February 2023). In addition to administering the paper-and-pen questionnaire, which took approximately 10 minutes, the researcher visited all classes to explain or answer the questions.

3.5. Method of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 using descriptive and inferential statistics. Precisely, the demographic information, perceptions of autonomous learning, and readiness were analyzed in terms of frequency, percentage, mean score, and standard deviation. Additionally, the differences between EFL learners’ different levels of education were determined using a one-way ANOVA.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 2. The participants’ demographic profile

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
<i>Age</i>		
18-21	104	42.6
22-26	131	53.7
27-30	7	2.9
Above	2	.8
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	221	90.6
Female	23	9.4
<i>Educational Level</i>		
Freshman	56	23.0
Sophomore	38	15.6
Junior	85	34.8
Senior	65	26.6
Total	244	100.0

The demographic information of the participants included age, sex, and educational level. In the above table, the analysis of participants’ ages revealed that 104 (42.6%) were between 18 and 21 years old, 131 (53.7%) were between 22 and 26 years old, 7 (2.9%) were between 27 and 30 years old, and 2 (.8%) were above 30 years old. As per gender, the analysis of participants constituted 221 (90.6%) male, and 23 (9.4%) female learners. Of the 204 participants who participated, 56 (23%) were freshmen, 38 (15.6%) were sophomore, 85 (34.8%) were junior, and 65 (26.6%) were senior.

4.1 Findings related to RQ 1: EFL learners' perceptions towards autonomous learning

Table 3. *EFL learners perceive autonomous learning*

No	ITEMS	FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE %	
	COGNITIVE COMPONENTS	STRONGLY AGREE AND AGREE	M(SD)
1	Autonomous learning plays an important role in English language learning.	219 (89.7%)	1.63(.767)
2	Autonomous learning is necessary for English language learning.	225 (92.3%)	1.66(.704)
3	Autonomous learning helps me to develop my English language proficiency.	223 (91.4%)	1.63(.722)
4	Autonomous learning helps me to improve my speaking skills.	204 (83.6%)	1.80(.831)
5	Autonomous learning helps me to improve my listening skills.	194 (80.3%)	1.93(.801)
6	Autonomous learning helps me to improve my reading skills.	227 (93%)	1.63(.699)
7	Autonomous learning helps me to improve my writing skills.	206 (84.4%)	1.81(.742)
8	Autonomous learning helps me to understand English grammar.	163 (66.8%)	2.16(.881)
AFFECTIVE COMPONENTS			
9	I find it interesting to learn English autonomously.	202 (82.7%)	1.97(.687)
10	I find it enjoyable to learn English autonomously.	200 (81.9%)	1.95(.715)
11	I set the goals for autonomous English learning.	174 (71.3%)	2.11(.799)
12	I often prepare classroom materials for myself before class.	193 (79.1%)	1.93(.886)

As indicated in Table 3, 93% of EFL learners strongly agreed that autonomous learning improved their reading ability. Additionally, 92.3% of the learners strongly agreed that autonomous learning is essential for the learning of a language. To develop their language proficiency, 91.4% agreed that they learned autonomously. A further 89.7% of the learners agreed that autonomous learning is important in regard to learning the English language. The data also revealed that 82.7% of EFL students considered autonomous learning to be engaging in learning the English language.

4.2 Findings related to RQ 2: EFL learners' perceptions towards readiness for autonomous learning.

Table 4. *EFL learners' readiness for autonomous learning*

No	ITEMS	FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE %	
		STRONGLY AGREE AND AGREE	M(SD)
1	I prefer my teacher to explain everything to me without asking me questions and testing my thinking.	70(28.7%)	2.98(.925)
2	I prefer my teacher not to ask me to help him/her to select activities or texts to work on in the classroom because I do not have sufficient knowledge.	104(42.6%)	2.68(.949)
3	I prefer my teacher not to involve me in reflecting on the activities I have done, as such activities have nothing to do with learning English.	109(44.7%)	2.58(.869)
4	I prefer my teacher to assess my work on his/her own without asking me to make any judgments.	121(49.6%)	2.50(.900)
5	I prefer my teacher to assess my classmates' work on his/her own without asking me to make any judgments.	124(50.8%)	2.47(.853)
6	I prefer my teacher to create opportunities where all the activities can be completed with him/her in the classroom, and thus no homework is set.	137(56.1%)	2.36(.870)
7	I prefer my teacher to pass knowledge to students who quietly listen to his/her presentation/explanation.	153(62.7%)	2.35(.874)
8	I prefer my teacher to tell me precisely what to do without asking me to take action or control a situation (take the initiative).	160(65.5%)	2.30(.818)
9	I prefer my teacher to be around me as I do not feel confident of learning on my own.	152(62.3%)	2.23(.899)
10	I prefer my teacher to control my learning; I am not good at working on my own.	158(64.7%)	2.20(1.034)
11	I prefer my teacher to tell me what my mistakes are without asking me to identify them on my own.	188(77%)	1.98(.826)
12	I prefer my teacher to nominate me to talk about my interests.	193(79.1%)	1.95(.741)
13	I prefer my teacher to nominate me to express my views in the classroom.	198(81.1%)	1.89(.793)
14	I prefer my teacher to give me activities to work on (either on my own or with my classmates), telling me the exact steps I should take to complete them.	218(89.4%)	1.68(.694)
15	I prefer my teacher to give me regular feedback on my work and tell me how to improve things.	221(90.6%)	1.59(.772)

As shown in Table 4, there are some areas (items 7–11) where EFL learners seem not to be ready to be autonomous learners. For example, the majority of EFL learners (77%) prefer their lecturers to identify their mistakes rather than identify them themselves. The table also shows that 65.5% of the learners strongly agreed that their lecturers should always inform them exactly what to do to control the learning situation. According to the data, 64.7% of

EFL students expect their lecturers to tell them what instructional strategies they should use to personalize their learning. Moreover, the data (62.7%) revealed that the learners wanted to receive knowledge from their lecturers passively because they seemed more dependent on them. In addition, 62.3% of the EFL learners felt less confident. Therefore, they want their lecturers to always be around when they are learning.

4.3 Findings related to RQ 3: Differences in readiness for autonomous learning among freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior learners

Table 5. *One-way ANOVA: Autonomous learning readiness among freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior learners*

		SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
Learners’ Readiness	Between Groups	.216	3	.072	.582	.627
	Within Groups	29.753	240	.124		
	Total	29.970	243			

Table 5 indicates One-Way ANOVA results for EF learners’ levels of education to determine if there was any significant difference. A one-way ANOVA suggested no significant differences among freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior learners in terms of their readiness for autonomous learning ($f(3, 240) = .582$ & $p = .427$).

Similarly, the Post-Hoc LSD (least significant difference) multiple comparison analysis also indicates that there was no significant difference.

5. DISCUSSION

This study investigated public university EFL learners’ perceptions of readiness for autonomous learning, and there were several noteworthy findings in this study. The first research question focused on how EFL learners at Kandahar University perceive autonomous learning. There was a positive perception of autonomous learning in general among the participants in this study, both cognitively and effectively. As a result, the participants felt that autonomous learning helped them learn and improve their language abilities. This implies that they enjoy learning through autonomous learning since it is interesting to them. In other words, EFL learners consider autonomous learning necessary for language acquisition. One possible explanation for this might be flexibility and control. Autonomous learning allows learners to have more flexibility and control over their learning process. They can decide what, when, and how they want to learn on the basis of their own needs and preferences. The results of this study are in line with those of previous studies (e.g., Tran, 2020; Tuan, 2021; Tareen et al., 2024), in which English language learners preferred autonomous learning and viewed it as a powerful motivating source. Tran’s (2020) study differs from the current study in that it focuses on vocabulary learning specifically, whereas the current study focuses on autonomous learning in general.

The second research question concentrated on EFL learners’ readiness for autonomous learning. One of the main findings in this part is that EFL learners at Kandahar University were not ready to look for their errors and improved either by themselves or by their peers.

It seems possible that this result may be due to cultural factors. In some cultures, openly admitting mistakes or seeking help from peers can be seen as a sign of weakness, leading to reluctance to acknowledge errors and assistance. Instead, these learners preferred their lecturers to identify their errors and tell them the right forms of those errors. However, this finding contradicts Hernawan's findings (2019), where learners showed willingness and were able to address their own mistakes and improve their autonomous learning characteristics. Additionally, the results of the current study indicated that EFL learners could not take initiative. This could be due to EFL learners' lack of confidence in their language, which could make them hesitant. Instead, they expected their lecturers to tell them what to do to learn effectively. However, in autonomous learning, learners must take responsibility for their own learning decisions and take the initiative to implement them (Lou, 2021; Singh Negi & Laudari, 2022; Tareen et al., 2023) without being entirely dependent on their teachers. Such learning is more effective when they are independent rather than actively dependent on their teachers. Next, the findings revealed that the learners were not ready to control their learning because they were not good on their own. In other words, these learners were unable to own their learning and develop strategies to reach their goals. These students may have had limited opportunities to develop autonomous learning skills or may not have been encouraged to set personal goals and develop strategies for achieving them. This finding aligns with Cirocki et al.'s (2019) finding. That is, when students decide and plan to participate in out-of-class activities, they are more likely to continue with immediate success.

The findings also revealed that the majority of the EFL learners seemed reliant on their lecturers and that they did not want to participate in learning activities inside the classroom. Instead, they expected their lecturers to transfer the knowledge to them. This means that EFL learners at Kandahar University are passive learners and that they do not feel ready or do not want to be ready for autonomous learning. It seems possible that in some cultures, there is a strong emphasis on authority figures, such as professors, as the main transmitters of knowledge. This can impact students' expectations regarding the role of lecturers in their learning process. These disappointing results support earlier sources, including Cirocki et al. (2019), Khairallah et al. (2020), and Singh Negi and Laudari (2022). The results of these three studies indicated that EFL learners completely relied on their teachers for explanations, translations of the English text into their local languages, or dictation of the answers. Furthermore, it appeared that the EFL learners in the current study lacked confidence in their ability to complete their assignments independently and relied on the teachers to provide answers. It is possible that EFL learners might fear making mistakes in their assignments due to language barriers or unfamiliarity with academic expectations in English-speaking educational contexts. As a result, they may seek reassurance from their teachers before proceeding with their work. These learners trust their lecturers to provide support in their classroom learning activities (Tareen et al., 2022). These learners believe that the answers or assistance from their lecturers will give them confidence and help them complete the tests. A similar result was found in Singh Negi and Laudari's study (2022), where the students did not feel qualified to complete their assignments on their own because they lacked confidence. Therefore, they mostly relied on the professors' answers to get them through exams and other classroom activities. This overreliance of learners on their lecturers might be the reason why EFL learners were not ready to act autonomously.

The third research question focused on whether there was any significant difference among freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior EFL learners. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference among these learners. The data indicates that all of these learners from the first senior year had the same perceptions of their readiness for autonomous learning. A possible explanation for this could be the educational context. The learning environment and instructional practices within the EFL classroom could have contributed to a consistent lack of confidence and reliance on teachers across all the learners. For example, if the teaching style heavily emphasized teacher-led instruction and discouraged autonomous learning, this could lead to uniformity in student behaviors. Comparatively, Bozkurt and Arslan (2018) also carried out a study to assess 6th, 7th, and 8th graders' readiness for autonomous learning. The findings obtained from their studies revealed that there was a significant difference among the three groups. Specifically, students in the 8th grade perceived themselves as more ready for autonomous learning than did those in the other two grades (6th & 7th).

5.1 Implications and limitations

There are implications for the Ministry of Higher Education and EFL lecturers in practice regarding the achievement of autonomous learning in this study. With respect to the Ministry of Higher Education, this study will hopefully increase awareness at the Ministry of Higher Education regarding why EFL learners at Kandahar University cannot become autonomous learners. The EFL lecturers play a key role. For example, lecturers make learners aware of their meta-cognitive abilities as part of the learning process. The development of meta-cognitive skills requires students to analyze their own strategies for tasks and ask themselves critical questions.

The current study has two inevitable limitations despite its possible contributions. The study does not generalize to other public universities in Afghanistan since it examines autonomous learning at a public university in Kandahar. Kandahar University may be the only place where the findings are applicable. A larger sample size from other public universities could be used in future research to gain a better understanding of the issue. Second, only the EFL learners' questionnaire was used for data collection, which might have had an impact on the results. For instance, learners' answers could have been dishonest. Students' interviews might be used in future studies to support the quantitative results.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to identify undergraduates' perceptions of autonomous learning and their readiness for autonomous learning. Additionally, this study examined the correlation between students' perceptions of autonomous learning and their readiness for autonomous learning and the significant differences in EFL students' readiness for autonomous learning. This study employed a quantitative approach in which a questionnaire was used for data collection. The results revealed that EFL learners had positive perceptions of autonomous learning. However, according to the results, they lacked several abilities and competencies necessary for autonomous learners; therefore, they were not yet ready to operate autonomously. A dynamic learning process, clear objectives, and active negotiation in the classroom are essential skills that students must acquire with the utmost urgency.

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