

## Language Learning Strategies and Learner Autonomy: The Case of Indonesian Tertiary EFL Students

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### Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the language learning strategies and autonomy of 76 Indonesian EFL university students and examining the correlations between the two. The Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) for ESL/EFL learners was used to collect the data on students' language learning strategy use and an adapted questionnaire developed by Chan et al. (2002) was used to assess students' autonomy. The results revealed that the Indonesian EFL students were medium users of memory, cognitive, compensation, affective, and social strategies but high users of metacognitive strategies. The participants also had positive perceptions of their autonomous learning abilities and did engage in several autonomous activities both inside and beyond the classroom. However, many of the most preferred out-of-class activities are more receptive rather than productive language use. Significant correlations were found between students' language learning strategy use and their

	perceptions of their abilities, and between their strategy use and the practices of autonomous English language learning outside the class. Practical implications for English language teaching in the Indonesian context are put forward.
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## Introduction

Language learning strategies and learner autonomy are two different terms that have always attracted notable research attention over the past few decades. The escalating interest in learner-centered approaches to language teaching, coupled with the progressing use of the technology-based approaches during the recent Covid-19 pandemic, emphasizes the recognition of the learners' active role in their learning and effective strategies they use in learning a new language. In the context of second or foreign language learning, learning strategies refer to "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferrable to new situations" (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989, p. 8). Meanwhile, learner autonomy is defined as the capacity to take control or take charge of one's own learning (Benson, 2013), which is manifested in how they go about their learning and transfer what they have learned to wider contexts (Little, 1991). Research has demonstrated that language learning strategies help students become more effective learners and boost the improvement of the target language (Oxford, 2016; Wong & Nunan, 2011), and that learner autonomy increases student motivation (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998), active participation in learning activities (Dincer et al., 2012), and improves language proficiency (Dafei, 2007; Mohamadpour, 2013).

In a country where English is taught as a foreign language like Indonesia, classroom instruction may be the only venue where students have contact with English. Once they leave the classroom, opportunities to use English are scarce as they are totally engrossed in their first language surroundings. Coupled with other unsupportive factors for successful language learning such as large class sizes, limited time allocation for English instruction, and lack of teacher's encouragement for students' participation in the classroom activities (Dardjowidjojo, 2000; Nur, 2004), promoting autonomous learning and effective learning strategies becomes more important if students are to achieve an appropriate level of communicative proficiency and become successful language learners.

The interest in both language learning strategies and learner autonomy is mainly driven by a desire to understand the characteristics of good language learners because good language learners are supposed to take conscious actions to improve and control their language learning (Oxford et al., 2014). Thus, understanding the characteristics of good language learners is important because once the characteristics are understood, teachers can explore the potential for learner training and approach their students with helpful well-designed tasks to help their students become better language learners (Sewell, 2003).

It has long been suggested in the literature that there is a close link between learning strategies and learner autonomy. Dickinson (1987), for example, maintains that learning strategies are central factors in the promotion and development of learner autonomy because appropriate strategy use allows learners to take more responsibility for their learning. According to Rubin (1987), students who use effective learning strategies have a better capacity to work beyond the classroom on their own when the teacher is not available to give directions input for their learning. In a similar vein, Oxford et al. (2014) stated that the use of language learning strategies promotes language learning as a cognitive process whereby learners take full control of their learning process. Cotterall (1999) asserted that if learners lack learning strategies training, they will have difficulties in the classroom that foster autonomous learning. In an EFL context, Wang (2016) found that after strategy training, the learners increasingly become conscious that they should be responsible for their learning and know how to perform autonomous learning. Thus, understanding learners' strategy use and autonomy is of great importance as it could provide teachers with fruitful information before any interventions to develop students' language learning strategies and to foster learner autonomy are carried out.

A number of studies on either language learning strategies or learner autonomy have been conducted over the world. However, many of the studies have focused on other variables that may affect both of the concepts such as gender, proficiency, self-efficacy, and majors of study. Little empirical research has been conducted to investigate the relationship between the two. Additionally, research on this issue in the Indonesian context is limited. Thus, this study attempted to fill the gaps by investigating the use of language learning strategies and learner autonomy among Indonesian tertiary students.

The purposes of this study were to identify the types of learning strategies used most and least by Indonesian tertiary EFL students and to investigate students' perceptions of their abilities in autonomous English language learning and the extent to which the students engage in such learning activities inside and outside the classroom. The study also examined the correlation between students' language learning strategy and their perceptions of their abilities in autonomous language learning, and the correlation between students' language learning strategy and the practice of autonomous language learning outside the classroom. Thus, the following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

1. What types of learning strategies do Indonesian tertiary EFL students use most and least in English language learning?
2. How do the students perceive their abilities in autonomous English language learning?
3. To what extent do the students engage in autonomous English language learning activities inside and outside the classroom?
4. Is there any correlation between students' language learning strategy and their perceptions of their abilities in autonomous English language learning?
5. Is there any correlation between students' language learning strategy and the practice of autonomous English language learning outside the classroom?

## Literature Review

### Language Learning Strategies

Strategies in language learning have been mainly associated with those used to make effective language learning. Wenden (1987) viewed learning strategies as "the various operations that learners use in order to make sense of their learning" (pp. 7-8). Oxford and Nyikos (1989) regard the concept as "operations used by learners to aid the acquisition, storage, and retrieval and use of information" (p. 291). This definition was further elaborated as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferrable to new situations" (p. 8). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) defined learning strategies as specific actions employed by the learner to facilitate learning, comprehending, and retaining new knowledge. In a

similar vein, Oxford (1990) defined the concept as specific actions that the learners use in order to learn faster, easier, more self-directed, more enjoyable, more effective, and more transferable to the new settings. More recently, Ortega (2009) regards learning strategies as conscious perceptual and behavioral actions taken by learners for the purpose of gaining control over their learning. For Griffiths (2008), learning strategies are actions that learners deliberately select to control their learning. Oxford (2017) further elaborated the definition where language learning strategies are regarded as complex, dynamic actions learners select and employ in particular situations to accomplish language tasks and increase their language learning development.

Besides differing views on the definition, learning strategies have also been classified in several ways. Rubin (1981), for example, divided learning strategies into direct strategies and indirect strategies. The direct strategies consist of clarification or verification, memorization, monitoring, guessing, practice, and deductive reasoning. The indirect strategies include seeking opportunities and practices. Chammot and Kupper (1989) classified learning strategies into three main categories, i.e. cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective. Cognitive strategies refer to behaviors, actions, or techniques used by learners to facilitate them in acquiring knowledge. Metacognitive strategies are techniques employed to control the learning process through planning, monitoring, evaluating, and modifying. Socio-affective strategies are techniques used by learners such as by asking for clarification, cooperating, imitating, and repeating. Oxford (1990) classified language learning strategies into two major types, i.e. *direct* strategies and *indirect* strategies. Direct strategies are strategies that require mental processing of the language. These include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Meanwhile, indirect strategies refer to strategies that support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language, which include metacognitive, affective, and social strategies (pp. 12-17). In Oxford's system, memory strategies are strategies used for remembering and retrieving new information. Examples of these strategies are using new English words in a sentence, using flashcards, and physically acting new English words. Cognitive strategies are mental strategies that learners use to understand and produce the language, such as reading for pleasure in English and watching English TV shows, while compensation strategies are those that help learners overcome knowledge gaps to continue the communication, for example using gestures and using

synonyms. Metacognitive strategies refer to the strategies used for coordinating the learning process. Examples of these strategies include planning a schedule for learning and practicing English, looking for people to talk to in English, and thinking about progress in learning English. Affective strategies have to do with regulating emotion, such as rewarding oneself when doing well in English and writing down feelings in a language learning diary. Lastly, social strategies are strategies for learning the target language with others, for example practicing English with other students and learning about the culture of English speakers.

### **Learner Autonomy**

Learner autonomy has so far been defined in many ways. This is because the concept is multifaceted (Benson, 2007; Smith, 2008) and there are diverse perspectives on what it constitutes (Palfreyman, 2003). Holec (1981) defined learner autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s learning” (p. 3). Little (1991) viewed the concept as “a *capacity* – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action” (p. 4), which is actualized in how learners perform their learning and transfer what they have learned to broader environments. Dickinson (1987) defined learner autonomy as “the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions” (p. 11). For him, autonomy means learners’ total responsibility for their learning performed without the investment of a teacher, institution, or specifically prepared materials. Benson (2001) defined the concept as “the capacity to take control of one’s own learning” (p. 47). Learners are decision-makers who practice different levels of control over learning management, learning content, and cognitive processes. Despite the numerous perspectives, there is a compromise that learner autonomy is best conceptualized as the capacity to take control or take charge of one’s own learning (Benson, 2013).

### **Research on Students’ Learning Strategies and Autonomy**

While a number of studies have been conducted on language learning strategies and learner autonomy, most of the studies have investigated the two separately (e.g. Alfian, 2021; Gani et al., 2018) or in relation to other variables (e.g. Bećirović et al., 2021; Yusnimar, 2019).

Scarce research has been done to investigate the relationship between the two. Among the few studies that sought to investigate the relationship between learner autonomy and language learning strategies are presented below.

Chen and Pan (2015) conducted a study with 130 ninth graders of a junior high school in central Taiwan to determine the language learning strategies preferred by the students, their level of English learning autonomy, and the relationship between English learning autonomy and language learning strategies. The findings showed that the participants had a medium level of English learning autonomy and infrequent use of language learning strategies. The students tended to use memory strategies the most and affective strategies the least. In addition, a correlation was found between learners' learning autonomy levels and the use of language learning strategies.

Iamudom and Tangkiengsirisin (2020) investigated the learner autonomy level and language learning strategies use among 200 Thai EFL learners comparing international school students and Thai public-school students in a tutorial school. Employing mix-method research, the study used questionnaires and interviews to collect the data. The findings revealed that Thai public school students had a higher level of learner autonomy and employed language learning strategies more than the international school students. The Thai public school students mostly used compensation strategies whereas the international school students widely used cognitive strategies.

Samaie et al. (2015) investigated the autonomy level and gender differences in language learning strategies and the relationship between autonomy and learning strategy use among 150 Iranian university EFL students at three different universities. The instruments used to gather data were Learner Autonomy questionnaire (Spratt et al., 2002) and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford, 1990). The results showed that the students had autonomy in language learning and believed that they were able to take responsibility for their own learning. A statistically significant difference was found between males and females in their learning strategy use in favor of female students. The results also showed that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between students' autonomy and their language learning strategy use.

Although the three studies cited above were conducted in three different contexts, they appeared to share similar results, i.e. that the use

of language learning strategy has a positive relationship with learner autonomy. However, considering a wide range of EFL contexts around the world and the importance of language learning strategies and learner autonomy in language learning, the above-mentioned studies embody very few studies and the results still need to be validated. To address the gap, this research attempted to provide a better understanding of Indonesian students' use of language learning strategies and their learner autonomy as well as the connection between the two. The results of the present study are hoped to validate and complement the results obtained in the previous studies and assist in offering suitable recommendations to teachers in the Indonesian context.

## Methods

### Participants

A total of 76 English department students of a higher education institution in Indonesia were recruited as the participants of this study. They comprised 65 females and 11 males, aged between 18 and 21 years old, and from three different years of study, i.e. year 1, year 2, and year 3, and with Intermediate English language proficiency on average. To select the participants, a convenience sampling technique was used.

### Research Instruments

Two different questionnaires were employed in this study. To collect the data on students' language learning strategy use, Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) for ESL/EFL learners was used. The SILL is a self-reporting questionnaire aimed to assess the frequency of students' language learning strategy use with 5-point Likert scale options, i.e. 'never true of me', 'usually not true of me', 'somewhat true of me', 'usually true of me', and 'always true of me'. The SILL consists of 50 items that are divided into six major categories of strategy, i.e. memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. This questionnaire was chosen because it is a standardized language learning strategy measurement tool that has been used in many studies around the world. In addition, the questionnaire is applicable to various foreign languages and has a high consistency of reliability, with 0.91 to 0.94 (Cronbach's Alpha) (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Ardasheva &

Tretter, 2013). To assess students' learner autonomy, an adapted questionnaire developed by Chan et al. (2002) was employed. For the purpose of this study, two of three sections of the original questionnaire were used. The first section consisted of 11 items focusing on students' perceptions of their abilities in several areas of English language learning both inside and outside the classroom. The participants rated their answers on a five-point scale, i.e. 1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = OK, 4 = good, and 5 = very good. The second section consists of 27 items that assess students' English language learning activities inside or outside the class, which could be considered as manifestations of autonomous language learning behavior. In this section of the questionnaire, students rated their answers on a four-point scale, i.e. 1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, and 4 = often. The rationale for choosing this questionnaire was that it integrated several concepts of LA suggested in the literature (Chan et al., 2002) and had been used in many previous research studies (e.g. Daflizar, 2017; Farahani, 2014; Razeq, 2014; Yıldırım, 2008).

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The students who agreed to participate in this study were given two sets of questionnaires to complete. Before the administration of the questionnaires, the participants were informed of the purpose of the study and were requested to complete the questionnaires as honestly as possible so that the results of the study would provide a better understanding of students' use of language learning strategies and autonomous language learning.

The data obtained through the questionnaires were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS. Specifically, mean scores, percentages, and standard deviations were used where appropriate for the descriptive data, and the Pearson Correlation was used to examine the correlation between students' language learning strategy use and their perceptions of their abilities in autonomous learning and between their learning strategy use and the practice of autonomous English language learning outside the class.

## Results

### Students' Usage of Language Learning Strategies

Table 1 shows the overall usage of language learning strategies among the participants. Oxford (1990) classified the strategy usage frequency into three levels: high (3.5-5.0), medium (2.5-3.4), and low (1.0-2.4).

**Table 1**

#### *Overall Usage of Language Learning Strategies*

Strategies	Mean	SD	Rank
<i>Direct Strategies</i>	3.33		
Memory Strategies	3.41	.42	2
Cognitive Strategies	3.23	.46	5
Compensation Strategies	3.35	.67	3
<i>Indirect Strategies</i>	3.38		
Metacognitive Strategies	3.97	.54	1
Affective Strategies	3.26	.57	4
Social Strategies	2.91	.64	6

As shown in Table 1, the participants were generally found to be medium users of memory, cognitive, compensation, affective, and social strategies but high users of metacognitive strategies. With a mean score of 3.97, metacognitive strategies were ranked the highest, followed by memory strategies (M=3.41), and compensation strategies (M=3.35) at the second and third place respectively. Meanwhile, social strategies were ranked the lowest, with a mean score of 2.91.

Looking closely at the metacognitive strategies (See Table 2), 'I try to find out how to be a better learner of English' was scored the highest (M=4.39), followed by 'I pay attention when someone is speaking English' in the second place (M=4.38), and 'I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better' in the third (M=4.26).

Regarding social strategies (See Table 3), there were three strategies in the medium frequency category and two in the low-frequency category. These two least used strategies were 'I ask for help from English speakers' (M=2.29) and 'I try to learn about the culture of English speakers' (M=2.39). Meanwhile, only one strategy was in the high-frequency

category, i.e. 'If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again' (M=3.87).

**Table 2**

*Students' Usage of Metacognitive Strategies*

Metacognitive Strategies	Mean	SD	Rank
I try to find as many ways I can to use my English.	4.05	.78	5
I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	4.26	.71	3
I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	4.38	.73	2
I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	4.39	.65	1
I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	3.64	.93	7
I look for people I can talk to in English.	3.53	.80	8
I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	3.18	.85	9
I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	3.99	1.02	6
I think about my progress in learning English.	4.25	.73	4

**Table 3**

*Students' Usage of Social Strategies*

Social Strategies	Mean	SD	Rank
If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	3.87	.89	1
I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.	2.55	1.30	4
I practice English with other students.	3.14	1.00	3
I ask for help from English speakers.	2.29	1.19	6
I ask questions in English.	3.22	.84	2
I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.	2.39	1.13	5

### Students' Perceptions of their Abilities in Autonomous English Language Learning

Table 4 presents the percentages of students' responses concerning their perceptions of their abilities in several English language learning activities. As shown in the table, the students' responses clustered in the 'OK' and 'Good' categories of the scale, in which more than 40% of the

students chose ten items in the 'OK' category and four items in the 'Good' category. The four activities in which students rated their abilities as 'good' are: choosing learning activities outside class (47.37%), choosing learning objectives in class (46.05%), choosing learning material in class (46.05%), and evaluating their learning (42.11%). The top five activities in which students rated their abilities as 'OK' are: deciding how long to spend on each activity (61.84%), choosing learning activities in class (53.95%), choosing learning materials outside class (52.63%), deciding what they should learn next in their English lesson (51.32%), choosing learning objectives outside the class (47.37%). Also, some students rated their abilities as 'very good' in identifying their weakness in English (22.37%). Only small percentages of the students rated their abilities as 'poor' or 'very poor' in any of the activities.

**Table 4***Students' Perceptions of Their Abilities in Autonomous Learning*

Learning areas	Very poor (%)	Poor (%)	OK (%)	Good (%)	Very good (%)
Choosing learning activities in class	0	3.95	53.95	36.84	5.26
Choosing learning activities outside class	0	1.32	44.74	47.37	6.58
Choosing learning objectives in class	0	3.95	42.11	46.05	7.89
Choosing learning objectives outside class	0	5.26	47.37	32.89	14.47
Choosing learning materials in class	0	1.32	43.42	46.05	9.21
Choosing learning materials outside class	0	2.63	52.63	31.58	13.16
Evaluating your learning	0	6.58	43.42	42.11	7.89
Evaluating your course	1.32	5.26	47.37	38.16	7.89
Identifying your weakness in English	0	6.58	38.16	32.89	22.37
Deciding what you should learn next in your English lesson	0	0	51.32	35.53	13.16
Deciding how long to spend on each activity	0	5.26	61.84	26.32	6.58

**Students' Engagement in Autonomous English Language Learning Activities Inside and Outside the Classroom**

Table 5 shows the percentages of the students' responses for items probing their engagement in autonomous English language learning activities both inside and outside the classroom. Regarding outside

classroom activities, there were 8 out of 22 activities that were practiced the most frequently (often or sometimes) by the majority (more than 70%) of the students, as listed in the order of frequency below:

- Listening to English songs (92.10%)
- Watching English movies (89.47%)
- Practicing using English with friends (88.16%)
- Noting down new words and their meanings (85.52%)
- Watching videos/DVDs/VCDs (84.21%)
- Watching English TV programs (82.89%)
- Using the internet in English (75.00%)
- Reading English notices around them (73.69%)
- Reading grammar books on your own (73.68%)

**Table 5**

*Students' Autonomous English Language Learning Activities*

No.	Activities	Least frequently practiced (Never + Rarely) (%)	Most frequently practiced (Often + Sometimes) (%)	Rank
<b>Outside the class</b>				
1.	Reading grammar books on your own	26.31	73.68	9
2.	Doing exercises which are not compulsory	39.48	60.53	12
3.	Noting down new words and their meanings	14.48	85.52	4
4.	Reading English notices around you	26.32	73.69	8
5.	Reading newspapers in English	59.21	40.79	20
6.	Sending e-mails in English	65.79	34.21	19
7.	Reading books or magazines in English	44.74	55.26	13
12.	Practicing using English with friends	11.85	88.16	3
13.	Doing English self-study in a group	32.90	67.11	10
14.	Watching English movies	10.53	89.47	2
15.	Writing a diary in English	71.06	28.95	21
16.	Using the internet in English	25.00	75.00	7
17.	Doing revision not required by the teacher	48.68	51.31	14
18.	Collecting texts in English (e.g. articles, brochures, labels, etc.)	44.73	55.26	13

19.	Going to see the teacher about your work	50.00	50.00	15
20.	Attending meetings in English	56.58	43.42	17
21.	Watching videos/DVDs/VCDs	15.79	84.21	5
22.	Reading English news online	35.53	64.48	11
<b>Inside the Class</b>				
23.	asked the teacher questions when you don't understand?	7.90	92.11	1
24.	noted down new information?	7.89	92.11	1
25.	made suggestions to the teacher?	69.73	30.26	4
26.	taken opportunities to speak in English?	13.15	86.84	2
27.	discussed learning problems with classmates?	14.47	85.52	3

In contrast, there were several activities infrequently (never or rarely) practiced by a considerable number of the students. They are:

- Writing a diary in English (71.06%)
- Sending e-mails in English (65.79%)
- Listening to English radio (64.47%)
- Reading newspapers in English (59.21%)

Regarding inside the classroom activities, four out of five learning activities were claimed to be frequently practiced by a vast majority of the students, including:

- asking the teacher questions when they don't understand (92.11%)
- noting down new information (92.11%)
- taking opportunities to speak in English (86.84%)
- discussing learning problems with classmates (85.52%)

On the contrary, a small number of the students (30.26%) indicated that they 'made suggestions to the teacher'.

### **Correlations between Students' Language Learning Strategy Use and Their Perceptions of Their Abilities in Autonomous English Language Learning**

A Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between students' language learning strategy use and their perceptions of their abilities in autonomous learning. The results showed that there was a positive correlation between students' language learning

strategy use and their perceptions of their abilities in autonomous English language learning ( $r=0.235$ ,  $N=76$ ). Moreover, the relationship was significant ( $p=.041$ ) (Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Learning Strategy Use and Abilities in Autonomous Learning*

		Strategy use	Abilities
Strategy use	Pearson Correlation	1	.235*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.041
	N	76	76
Abilities	Pearson Correlation	.235*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	
	N	76	76

**Correlations between Students' Language Learning Strategy Use and the Practice of Autonomous English Language Learning outside the Classroom**

Another Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between students' language learning strategy use and their practice of autonomous English language learning outside the classroom. The results showed that there was a positive correlation between students' strategy use and their practice of autonomous English language learning outside the class ( $r=0.631$ ,  $N=76$ ) and the correlation was also significant ( $p=.000$ ) (Table 7).

**Table 7**

*Language Learning Strategy Use and the Practice of Autonomous English Language Learning Outside the Class*

		LLS	Autonomous Activities
LLS	Pearson Correlation	1	.631**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	76	76
Autonomous Activities	Pearson Correlation	.631**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	76	76

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## Discussion

The findings of the current study showed that the most common strategies used by Indonesian tertiary students were metacognitive strategies. According to Oxford (1990), metacognitive strategies are “actions which go beyond purely cognitive devices, and which provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process” (p. 136). These findings are consistent with the findings of Rianto’s (2020) study in a similar context. However, the findings are different from the results reported in Chen and Pan’s (2015) study in the Taiwan context where the participants mostly used memory strategies, and those found in lamudom and Tangkiengsirisin’s (2020) study in the Thailand context, in which compensation strategies and cognitive strategies were mainly used by Thai public school students and international school students respectively. The high usage of metacognitive strategies may be due to students’ high underlying motivation to learn English since they were doing English major and the recognition of the importance of coordinating their language learning. Moreover, the dissimilarities of findings in different contexts confirm the theories and research findings suggesting that language learning strategy use is conditioned by the different cultural backgrounds of the learners (e.g. Habók et al., 2021; Oxford, 1996; Oxford & Gkonou, 2018).

The findings also showed that the participants of this study had positive views about their autonomous learning abilities concerning their English learning activities both inside and outside the classroom. These findings are in line with the findings achieved in several studies undertaken in ESL or EFL contexts (e.g. Chan et al., 2002; Razeq, 2014; Üstünlüoğlu, 2009; Yıldırım, 2008). These positive views about their abilities could be attributed to students’ age and maturity so that they feel confident to exercise these autonomy-related activities. Grow (1991) stated that “Self-direction,... is partly a personal trait analogous to maturity” (p. 127). With this understanding, the teacher should underpin these abilities by engaging students in more autonomy-related activities in the classroom.

The third question attempted to find out the extent to which the students engaged in autonomous English language learning activities inside and outside the class. The results showed that, out of 22 activities outside the classroom, there were 8 activities that were most frequently by the majority of the students. The top five activities were listening to English

songs, watching English movies, practicing using English with friends, noting down new words and their meanings, and watching videos/DVDs/VCDs. These patterns of activities are similar to those revealed in several other studies undertaken in different contexts (e.g. Chan et al., 2002; Razeq, 2014; Tamer, 2013). It is apparent that some of these preferred activities involve the use of technology. This suggests that current technological advancements have facilitated students' engagement in language learning without the investment of a teacher. The literature has highlighted the advantages of technology use for autonomous language learning. Technology provides opportunities for students to use language in authentic settings (Kessler, 2009, p. 79), increases the exposure to the target language (Lai et al., 2015), fosters learners' control over their learning, and allows learners to choose the most up to date, beneficial and appropriate materials (Yumuk, 2002). Despite these apparent advantages, however, teachers still need to support and guide students on how to use technological resources for effective English learning. The support could be in the forms of motivation and recommendations on which technological resources to use, and advice on how to use the resources. It may be interesting to note that although most of the most frequently practiced activities involve receptive activities, '*practicing using English with friends*' and '*noting down new words and their meanings*' are linked with more productive language use. This indicates deliberate efforts made by the students to engage in activities for English language learning. On the contrary, the results of this study also showed that some activities were 'never' or 'rarely' practiced, namely 'writing a diary in English', sending e-mails in English, listening to English radio, and reading newspapers in English. These results confirm the results obtained in Daflizar's study (2020) in a similar context. This suggests that these activities are not common practices of students' learning in this context.

As for the inside-of-class activities, the majority of the participants claimed that they frequently engaged in four out of the five activities listed in the questionnaire. The activities were *asking the teacher questions when you don't understand*, *noting down new information*, *taking opportunities to speak in English*, and *discussing learning problems with classmates*. These findings indicate that the students do take some initiative in most of the inside the class activities. However, these behaviors may be best labeled as *reactive autonomy* (Littlewood, 1999). Unlike *proactive autonomy* where learners are able to take control of their own learning,

reactive autonomy is the kind where learners would take control of their learning once the direction has been initiated by the teacher or the curriculum. However, reactive autonomy is important to take into account since it may be either a beginning phase to proactive autonomy or even a goal in its own right (Littlewood, 1999). On the other hand, the majority of the students claimed that they rarely or never made suggestions to the teacher. This is not unexpected since the cultural values in this context do not commonly encourage students to articulate their ideas. Students' reluctance in articulating their views such as making suggestions or asking argumentative questions to the teacher may be caused by their refusal to be considered deliberately critical, which may be considered culturally inappropriate conduct (Wachidah, 2001).

The statistical analyses of the data revealed that there were significant correlations between students' language learning strategy use and their perceptions of their abilities in autonomous learning, and between their strategy use and the practices of autonomous English language learning outside the class. These results are in line with those found by Chen and Pan (2015) and Samaie et al. (2015) in different contexts which found a correlation between students' use of language learning strategies and their autonomy in a positive way. In other words, the more language learning strategies the students use, the higher their level of autonomy. These results confirm the supposition put forwarded by Rubin (1987) that effective learning strategies use leads to students' better capacity to work beyond the classroom on their own without the presence of the teacher. However, it is important to note that while the correlation between language learning strategy use and the practice of autonomous English language learning outside the classroom was moderate, the correlation between learning strategy use and students' perceptions of their abilities in autonomous English language learning was weak, which may indicate an unsubstantial connection between these two variables.

### Conclusion and Implications

This study is one of the very few studies that investigated the use of language learning strategies and learner autonomy among Indonesian EFL university students. This study also elaborated on the relationship between these two concepts, which has not received much research attention. The results revealed that the Indonesian EFL students were medium users of

memory, cognitive, compensation, affective, and social strategies but high users of metacognitive strategies. The participants of this study were also found to have positive perceptions of their autonomous learning abilities regarding their English learning activities both inside and outside the classroom, and engage in many autonomous activities both inside and beyond the classroom. However, many of the most preferred out-of-class activities are more receptive rather than productive language use. The results also showed significant correlations between students' language learning strategy use and their perceptions of their abilities in autonomous learning, and between their strategy use and the practices of autonomous English language learning outside the classroom. These findings contribute to the existing body of literature particularly on the issue of language learning strategies and the level of learner autonomy among EFL students and validate previous research findings on the relationship between language learning strategies and learner autonomy.

The findings of the present study have some practical educational implications in EFL teaching and learning. Teachers should encourage students to engage in various English learning activities and use various language learning strategies to promote their self-confidence. The teachers should also design classroom activities that allow learner involvement and self-reflection, and the use of the target language. Their role should be more as a facilitator who provide support and guidance than as an authority who control all language learning processes. Explicit strategy training may be needed as a transitional phase during which control is gradually shifted from the teacher to students and to make them recognize their abilities in the process as well as allow them to take responsibilities.

### Limitations of the Study

As with any research, the present study has some limitations. First, it involved only a small number of participants from one higher education institution in a province in Indonesia. Further research should involve a bigger number of participants from a range of higher education institutions in order to increase the representativeness of the study and provide a more comprehensive portrait of the topic under investigation. Second, the data were collected only through self-report questionnaires. Further research should employ other data collection methods such as interviews,

learning diaries, observations, etc. to enhance the richness of the data and yield a more comprehensive picture of students' actual practices of language learning strategies and autonomous learning.

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