TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN PROMOTING LEARNER AUTONOMY: THE SOCIO-CULTURAL BARRIERS OF INDONESIAN EFL TEACHERS

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Abstract: The concept of learner autonomy has garnered significant attention from scholars, educators, policy makers, and researchers across various countries. However, In Indonesia, the body of research dedicated to learner autonomy is still growing, with specific attention needed to identify potential obstacles that might deter its promotion. This study, therefore, aims to delve into the socio-cultural challenges encountered by secondary school teachers when fostering learner autonomy.This investigation is crucial, as socio-cultural influences appear to be a significant barrier for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Indonesia. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive research approach, utilizing a purposive sampling technique to select participants based on specific criteria. These included senior high school teachers with over five years of experience at their respective schools, who were also willing to participate in interviews. In total, six English teachers from different senior high schools within a single Indonesian province contributed to this study. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, and the teachers' responses were quoted and interpreted in light of the data analysis and supporting theories from relevant literature. The findings revealed three primary socio-cultural barriers impeding the promotion of learner autonomy: (1) barriers due to language issues, (2) barriers related to a limited worldview, and (3) institutional barriers. This research implies that promoting learner autonomy in language learning requires adjustments in teaching strategies, curriculum design, and institutional policies. Research suggestions are also provided to further research to address the limitation of the current study.
Keywords: *challenges, learner autonomy, socio-cultural barriers*

INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies have engaged in detailed examinations of Learner Autonomy (LA), each bringing a distinct angle to the research. For instance, some researchers have chosen to focus on teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019; Khotimah et al., 2019; Little, 2022; Melvina & Suherdi, 2019). These studies have explored the educators' viewpoint, gauging their understanding, readiness, and strategies to cultivate LA within the classroom setting. On the other hand, a separate body of research, including (Baru et al., 2020; Basri, 2023; Cahyana et al., 2019) have delved into students' perspectives. These studies have explored students' perceptions of LA, their readiness for autonomous learning, and the role technology can play in fostering such independence. These perspectives are crucial, as the success of LA heavily relies on students' ability and willingness to take charge of their own learning process.

In Indonesia, the concept of learner autonomy is still in its nascent stages, despite recent initiatives promoting more student-led learning in classrooms (Melvina & Suherdi, 2019). These initiatives aim to inspire LA, allowing students to take charge of their own learning, to personalize their educational journey, monitor their own progress, and create an environment that is more attuned to their individual learning needs. However, the relatively new status of learner autonomy in the Indonesian educational scenario suggests a lack of widespread understanding and possibly resistance from educators and institutions accustomed to more traditional pedagogical methods (Melvina & Julia, 2021). As such, further research and practical efforts should focus on addressing these challenges and understanding how to facilitate the successful integration of LA into the Indonesian education system.

However, despite the depth of the existing research, there remains a noticeable gap when it comes to examining the socio-cultural barriers that could potentially hinder the promotion of learner autonomy, particularly within different cultural contexts like Indonesia. This is significant because cultural norms and societal expectations can significantly influence both educators' teaching styles and students' learning methods (Gong et al., 2021). Cultural norms dictate how knowledge is transferred and acquired. For instance, in cultures where the traditional pedagogy is teacher-centered, there is a high respect for authority and knowledge is often considered to be transferred from the

teacher to the students, instead of students being encouraged to seek, construct, and validate knowledge themselves. This can affect the willingness and ability of students to take charge of their own learning as is required in LA.

Moreover, societal expectations can also affect how LA is perceived and practiced. For instance, societal pressure for students to conform to established standards of success can restrict their ability to explore their own educational interests and to take risks in their learning, both of which are key elements of LA. Furthermore, the attitude of educators towards LA is also significantly influenced by socio-cultural factors. In cultures where rote learning and exam-focused education are the norm, teachers might find it challenging to shift to a student-led, autonomous learning approach. Their reluctance can stem from concerns about moving away from proven traditional teaching methods, fear of reduced control over classroom activities, or even lack of support from parents who are used to traditional education methods.

It is therefore essential to address this gap in the literature by scrutinizing the challenges and factors impeding the full implementation and acceptance of learner autonomy in Indonesia. These hindrances may include inadequate pedagogical support, lack of training for educators in fostering autonomy, societal attitudes towards self-directed learning, or educational policies that may not fully support the development of Learner Autonomy. By doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles to the adoption of Learner Autonomy and consequently develop more effective strategies to enhance its implementation, ultimately improving learning outcomes. In light of the foregoing discussion, the objective of the current research is to delve into the socio-cultural challenges encountered by secondary school teachers when promoting learner autonomy.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Promotion of Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy is a critical concept in contemporary educational theory and practice that emphasizes the learner's active and self-directed involvement in their own educational process. Autonomous learners are characterized by their ability to set personal learning goals, manage their time effectively, and independently choose the most appropriate learning strategies (Little, 2022). This active participation is

underpinned by a strong motivation, often stemming from genuine interest in the subject matter or a specific goal in mind. Importantly, these learners engage critically with the material, not merely absorbing information but seeking to understand, analyze, and evaluate it (Charokar & Dulloo, 2022). They accept the responsibility for their learning outcomes, recognizing that their success is largely predicated on their effort. In addition, they display resourcefulness in sourcing and utilizing various learning aids, such as books, online materials, or individuals who can provide assistance. Reflecting on their learning progress is another vital aspect of learner autonomy, as it enables these learners to contemplate what they have learned, assess the effectiveness of their learning, and devise strategies for future improvement (Hsieh & Hsieh, 2019). They also undertake self-assessment, gauging their progress towards set goals, identifying areas of weakness, and modifying their learning strategies accordingly (Thanh, 2019). It is crucial to note that while learner autonomy emphasizes the learners' role, it does not imply that they learn in isolation. Teachers still play a significant role in fostering this autonomy by offering guidance, resources, and a supportive learning environment.

Pertinent to TEFL enterprise, there has been a burgeoning effort dedicated to the promotion of learner autonomy. Studied who focus on eliciting the effort of promoting learner autonomy from teachers' perspective was done by Almusharraf (2020) Borg & Alshumaimeri (2019), Shahzad et al. (2021). All of the studies focused on the concept of learner autonomy in the context of English language teaching, particularly in Saudi Arabian universities. However, the methodologies and findings of these studies provide different perspectives and implications.

A qualitative case study was conducted by Borg & Alshumaimeri (2019) to provide a more in-depth look into teacher practices and roles in fostering learner autonomy, based on a social constructivist and transformative learning theory framework. The study demonstrated that promoting autonomous learning positively affected students' intrinsic engagement and motivation, offering practical strategies for cultivating learner autonomy in English language education. This research underlines the potential benefits of implementing autonomous learning strategies and the importance of understanding the socio-cultural contexts of language learning. Borg & Alshumaimeri (2019) utilized a questionnaire-based approach to examine teacher beliefs and practices, with a particular focus on the constraints inhibiting learner

autonomy. Their study found that while teachers believed in the importance of promoting learner autonomy, they also felt that its implementation was often hindered by curricular, societal, and learner factors. This study highlights the importance of considering these constraints when promoting learner autonomy in English language teaching and suggests that further mixed-methods research could be beneficial in deepening the understanding of teacher conceptualizations of learner autonomy. In contrast, Shahzad et al. (2021) adopted a more teacher-focused approach, exploring learner autonomy from the teachers' perspectives using structured interviews. The study indicated a high level of awareness and use of learner autonomy among teachers, with the teachers outlining various roles they could undertake to foster autonomy. The novelty of this study lies in its teacher-focused approach, as it emphasizes the teacher's role in facilitating learner autonomy and suggests it could lead to more natural and effective English language learning.

In sum, while all studies value the concept of learner autonomy, they differ in their methodologies and focus areas. Each study provides unique insights and implications for fostering learner autonomy in English language teaching, pointing towards a need for balanced consideration of learner, teacher, and socio-cultural factors.

The Socio-Cultural Barriers

As mildly noted above, learner autonomy is an educational concept where learners take charge of their own learning process. They set their own goals, manage their learning resources, evaluate their progress, and make necessary adjustments to their learning strategies. It is highly beneficial in encouraging lifelong learning and critical thinking skills. However, there are several socio-cultural barriers that can impede the promotion of learner autonomy according to Savolainen (2016). First, *language problems*. Language barriers can pose significant challenges to learner autonomy. If a learner is not proficient in the language of instruction, they may struggle to understand content, engage in discussions, or access additional resources for self-study. This can impede their ability to independently guide their learning process. Second, *social stigma and cultural taboos*. Societal norms, stigmas, and cultural taboos can also impact learner autonomy. For example, in certain societies, education might be viewed as less important for certain groups, due to gender, socioeconomic status, or other factors. These stigmas and taboos can discourage individuals from these groups

from taking charge of their learning. Third, *small-world related barriers*: The term "small-world" often refers to the limitations placed on individuals due to their immediate environment or social circle. For example, learners from rural or isolated communities may lack exposure to diverse ideas, perspectives, or opportunities for self-guided learning. This can hinder their ability to take initiative in their learning process. Fourth, *institutional barriers*. Institutions, such as schools or universities, can inadvertently create barriers to learner autonomy through their policies or curriculum design. For example, a rigid curriculum that does not allow for student choice or a grading system that discourages risk-taking can impede the development of learner autonomy. Fifth, *organizational barriers*. Similarly, organizational structures and norms within an institution can also impact learner autonomy. If an organization does not value or foster self-directed learning, it can be difficult for learners within that organization to develop autonomy.

Researchers have also identified some other key impediments. A study by Yasmin et al. (2020) emphasized the role of ingrained educational traditions in inhibiting learner autonomy. Many cultures have a deep-seated belief in teacher authority and lecture-based learning. These traditions can be antithetical to learner autonomy, as they discourage independent exploration and critical thinking in favor of rote memorization and passive acceptance of teacher-transmitted knowledge.

In the same vein, Felix (2020) pointed out the significance of the socio-political context in shaping learner autonomy. In societies with a strict hierarchy or where conformism is highly valued, there can be a limited acceptance of the individualism inherent in learner autonomy. Moreover, societies characterized by heavy political control may also resist educational methods that promote independent thought and personal initiative.

Lastly, according to Wiraningsih and Santosa (2020), the personal belief systems and attitudes of teachers, students, and parents also play a major role in facilitating or impeding learner autonomy. Misconceptions about learner autonomy, such as viewing it as a lack of structure or discipline, can pose significant barriers. Teachers might worry about a loss of control in the classroom, while students may feel overwhelmed by the responsibility, and parents might perceive it as a lack of adequate

teaching. These concerns often stem from a lack of understanding or misconceptions about the nature of learner autonomy and its potential benefits.

In light of these additional barriers, it becomes clear that promoting learner autonomy requires not just structural changes, but also a deep-rooted cultural shift. Education stakeholders need to address these socio-cultural barriers and foster an environment that encourages learner autonomy.

The current study was conducted in the Indonesian context where it is a country that rich in cultural diversity with a high sense of community and respect for authority figures, which inherently guides its educational paradigm. This means that learning is often facilitated in a hierarchical manner, with teachers and elders being perceived as the primary source of knowledge and wisdom. This socio-cultural norm can often inhibit the promotion of learner autonomy as it inherently discourages independent critical thinking and self-directed learning. However, there is limited knowledge about what actually impedes the promotion of learner autonomy among Indonesian learners. Included in this scant research are studies conducted by Cirocki et al. (2019) and Fauzi et al. (2020) which explore the concept of learner autonomy within the Indonesian context, particularly in relation to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Both studies conclude that participants are generally unprepared for autonomous learning. Moreover, these studies reveal that participants have a limited understanding of learner autonomy. This underlines the importance of delving into a comprehensive study aimed at identifying and understanding the barriers that hinder the promotion of learner autonomy.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative and descriptive methodology, set in the real-world context of senior high school classrooms where instruction and learning occur. The participants were English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers who have personal encounters with the issues being investigated. The descriptive nature of the study allowed researchers to explore the traits of the teachers and their concerns regarding fostering learner independence. Because this investigation focused on the real-world challenges EFL teachers encounter in fostering learner autonomy, the descriptive technique was considered appropriate. This method enabled a thorough

understanding of the barriers to fostering learner autonomy in English education and contributed to determining the study's results, following the suggestions (Creswell, 2017)

The study applied a purposive sampling techniques to select participants based on specific attributes. These attributes included senior high school teachers with more than five years of teaching experience in their respective schools and who were open to participating in interviews. The study spanned four schools. The sample consisted of six senior high school teachers from these four diverse schools, located in Tolitoli, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. These teachers were selected because of their extensive teaching experience, which suggests a deep understanding of their students' traits and learning behaviors. Their comprehension of their students' learning aptitudes, techniques, and reflections is likely to be more in-depth due to their experience. As a result, their teaching methods and responsibilities could potentially shape the students' self-perceptions of their learning, thereby affecting learner autonomy. This factor played a significant role in their selection for this study.

To conduct interviews with the participants, we followed interview protocols and used an audio recording device. A semi-structured interview method was used to explore the teachers' viewpoints on the difficulties they encounter in fostering learner autonomy in their classrooms. During the interview section, the study's objective was thoroughly explained to all participants. Each participant agreed to participate in the interview process. All data obtained from the interviews were kept confidential and were only used for analysis.

However, in line with Ary et al. (2010) the researchers maintained the option to modify the pre-set interview questions as the interviews progressed. The probing questions were adjusted according to the category recommended by Savolainen (2016), as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Socio-culture barriers

Types of Socio-Cultural Barriers	Main Feature of Barriers
Barriers due to language problems	● Insufficient language proficiency ● Dependence on teachers
Barriers related to social stigma and cultural taboo	● Being classified as a member of a stigmatized group of people. ● Prohibitions related to cultural taboo.
Small-world related barriers	● Distrust of outsiders as information sources ● Avoidance of risk-taking
Institutional	● Authoritarian control
Organizational	● Strong hierarchies within the community ● Lack of trust

The categorization process divided the challenges that EFL teachers face in promoting learner autonomy into five distinct categories. These categories include barriers due to language problems, barriers related to social stigma and cultural taboo, small-world related barriers, and institutional and organizational barriers (Savolainen, 2016). During the data collection procedure, the eight participating EFL teachers were assigned the codes T-1 (Teacher 1), T-2 (Teacher 2), T-3 (Teacher 3), T-4 (Teacher 4), T-5 (Teacher 5), T-6 (Teacher 6). Both the documentation of the research process and the collection of the input data were facilitated through the use of an audio recorder. This device was instrumental in recording every detail mentioned during the interviews, ensuring no critical data was missed.

In the process of analyzing the data for this study, we adhered to the five phases proposed by Creswell (2017): data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Once the data collection process was completed, which involved conducting interviews, the recorded interviews were transcribed meticulously. These transcriptions were then thoroughly read and reviewed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

As mildly noted above that, we use the types of socio-cultural barriers proposed by Savolainen (2016) as a guidance to identify the barriers encountered by the teachers. The findings of this research revealed three out six barriers successfully identified. Barriers due to language issues, barriers related to a limited worldview and institutional barriers. Those barriers are explained in detail respectively.

Barriers due to language issues

Upon analyzing the responses from the six educators, each highlighted a unique language skill that they found to pose the most significant challenge to learners striving for autonomy, including listening comprehension, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, pragmatic competence, and vocabulary acquisition.

The following excerpt present their responses:

What specific language skills do learners struggle with most when trying to achieve autonomy?

Teacher 1: In my experience, listening comprehension often poses a significant challenge for learners striving for autonomy. […] This skill is difficult to practice alone, and without a strong foundation, students may struggle to engage in naturalistic, authentic language settings.

Teacher 2: I've noticed that many students grapple with reading comprehension. […] The lack of immediate feedback in reading can often make this a tough skill to master autonomously.

Teacher 3: In my observation, speaking can be the most difficult skill for learners striving for autonomy. It involves not just correct grammar and vocabulary, but also pronunciation, intonation, and fluidity. […] In a classroom environment, teachers can provide structured speaking practice and immediate corrective feedback, but this is often missing in self-learning.

Teacher 4: From my teaching experience, writing tends to be a skill that many learners struggle with. Writing well requires a strong command of language structure, vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions. […] Feedback is crucial in writing, and when learners are trying to achieve autonomy, the absence of this feedback can make it challenging.

Teacher 5: I would say that pragmatic competence is a major hurdle for learners aiming for language autonomy. […] This can be particularly challenging to learn without direct social interaction and cultural immersion.

Teacher 6: Often, I've found that self-directed vocabulary acquisition can be a challenge for autonomous learners. […] They may not know which words are most useful to learn, or they may forget words without regular review and use.

A common theme across the responses was the importance of feedback in the learning process, which is often lacking in autonomous learning situations. Contextual understanding was also frequently mentioned, emphasizing the need for learners to grasp the cultural nuances, social implications, and usage of language within different scenarios. Despite these shared themes, each language skill came with its own unique set of challenges. Listening comprehension, for example, required real-time language processing, while reading comprehension necessitated a nuanced understanding of cultural and idiomatic expressions. Speaking involved challenges related to pronunciation, intonation, and fluidity, while writing demanded a firm command of language structure and the ability to organize thoughts effectively. Pragmatic competence raised the issue of understanding the social and cultural context of language

use, whereas vocabulary acquisition underscored the need for regular review and effective learning strategies. Thus, while each teacher's perspective is distinct, collectively, they underscore the multifaceted challenges that learners face in achieving language autonomy.

Barriers related to a limited worldview

Upon analyzing the insights from the six educators, each underscores a unique way in which expanding learners' worldviews can facilitate their autonomy in learning. They highlighted aspects such as stimulating curiosity and motivation, providing a broader context for language learning, understanding the real-world applicability and relevance of language skills, exploring diverse language styles and genres independently, developing critical thinking skills, and building confidence, openness, and a tolerance for ambiguity.

The following excerpt present their insight:

In what ways can expanding learners' worldviews facilitate their autonomy in learning?

Teacher 1: "Broadening learners' worldviews can stimulate their curiosity and motivate them to explore further. For instance, introducing students to global issues, diverse cultures, and different perspectives can make them realize how language is not just a communication tool, but a window to understand and connect with the world. This intrinsic motivation can drive their autonomous learning."

Teacher 2: "Expanding learners' worldviews can provide them with a greater context for their language learning. When students understand that language is not just about grammar and vocabulary but also about culture, history, and worldview, they are more likely to engage in autonomous activities such as reading foreign literature, watching foreign films, or interacting with foreign speakers."

Teacher 3: "A broader worldview can help students understand the real-world applicability and relevance of their language skills. They begin to understand that language learning isn't confined to textbooks or exams but has tangible implications for their future careers, travels, and personal growth. This realization often encourages them to take greater responsibility for their own learning."

Teacher 4: "By expanding learners' worldviews, we introduce them to diverse language styles and genres that they can explore independently. For instance, if a student gains interest in Japanese anime, they might start learning Japanese autonomously to better understand the content. Or, if they're passionate about climate change, they might independently read English articles and research papers on the topic."

Teacher 5: "As we broaden learners' worldviews, we also help them develop critical thinking skills. They learn to question, analyze, and form their own opinions. These skills are not only essential for understanding complex language materials but also for autonomous learning, as they enable students to self-evaluate their progress and determine their own learning strategies."

Teacher 6: "When learners' worldviews expand, they become more confident and open-minded, which are crucial traits for language autonomy. They become less

> afraid of making mistakes, more willing to take risks in communication, and more receptive to feedback. They also develop a greater tolerance for ambiguity, which is important for dealing with the uncertainty and complexity of a foreign language."

A common thread across the responses is the connection between an expanded worldview and the real-world application of language learning, which is often lacking in autonomous learning situations. Each teacher sees this expansion as a means to enhance learner autonomy. However, each aspect of an expanded worldview comes with its own unique set of facilitators. For example, stimulating curiosity can drive autonomous learning, while understanding the cultural, historical, and worldview context of language can engage learners in autonomous activities. Real-world applicability and relevance of language skills can encourage self-guided learning, while independent exploration of diverse language styles and genres can be facilitated by personal interests. Critical thinking skills can enable self-evaluation and independent learning strategies, whereas confidence, openness, and a tolerance for ambiguity can make learners more receptive to feedback and the complexity of a foreign language. Thus, while each teacher's perspective is distinct, collectively, they underscore the multifaceted benefits of broadening learners' worldviews to foster autonomous learning.

Institutional barriers

Upon analyzing the responses from the six educators, each pinpointed a unique institutional barrier that they found to hinder the promotion of learner autonomy, including a traditional, teacher-centered approach, the emphasis on standardized testing, a lack of resources or opportunities for practice, a rigid curriculum structure, lack of teacher training in promoting learner autonomy, and policies that limit technology integration.

The following excerpt present their responses:

How do institutional policies or regulations hinder the promotion of learner autonomy?

> Teacher 1: "Many institutions still employ a traditional, teacher-centered approach to education, which can inadvertently discourage learner autonomy. This approach often emphasizes rote learning and regurgitation of facts, leaving little room for self-directed learning, critical thinking, or creativity."
> Teacher 2: "Standardized testing, while necessary for some purposes, can unintentionally stifle learner autonomy. When the emphasis is placed heavily on test scores, students might focus more on 'teaching to the test' rather than developing a genuine understanding of the material and the ability to learn independently."
> Teacher 3: "In some cases, institutional policies do not provide enough resources or opportunities for students to practice language outside the classroom. For

instance, there might be insufficient language labs, libraries, or exchange programs. This lack of support can limit students' opportunities to practice and learn autonomously."

Teacher 4: "A common institutional barrier is the rigid curriculum structure, which often leaves little room for individual interests or learning styles. If a curriculum is strictly defined with no flexibility, students may not have the chance to explore their own interests and may struggle to take charge of their own learning."

Teacher 5: "Sometimes, the lack of teacher training in promoting learner autonomy can be a hindrance. If the institution does not provide or encourage professional development in this area, teachers may not know how to foster autonomous learning effectively in their classrooms."

Teacher 6: "Institutional policies that do not allow for technology integration can also impede learner autonomy. In today's digital age, technology can greatly enhance self-directed learning, allowing students to access resources, practice skills, and connect with native speakers around the world. If institutions do not provide or allow for the use of such tools, it can limit students' ability to learn independently."

A common theme across the responses was the restrictive nature of institutional policies or practices, which often limit opportunities for self-directed learning. Each institutional barrier came with its own unique set of challenges. A traditional approach, for instance, discourages critical thinking and creativity, while an emphasis on standardized testing encourages teaching to the test rather than fostering genuine understanding. A lack of resources or opportunities for practice limits students' ability to apply their language skills outside the classroom, and a rigid curriculum structure stifles the exploration of individual interests. Lack of teacher training inhibits effective facilitation of autonomous learning, and restrictive technology policies limit students' access to digital resources that can enhance their learning. Thus, while each teacher's perspective is distinct, collectively, they underscore the multifaceted challenges that institutional barriers present in promoting learner autonomy.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to find out the socio-cultural barriers in promoting learner autonomy in secondary school perceived by the English teachers. The findings of the research consist of three main themes related to the barriers that hinder the promotion of learner autonomy perceived by English teachers: barriers due to language issues, barriers related to a limited worldview, and institutional barriers.

In line with the first barrier, it was found that language skills, such as listening comprehension, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, pragmatic competence, and vocabulary acquisition was considered as barriers in the promotion of learner autonomy. This is aligned with the findings of several studies (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019; Lin &

Reinders, 2019; Yasmin et al., 2019). These studies similarly emphasized the role of feedback in the learning process, which corroborates the educators' common theme. Moreover, the importance of contextual understanding, including cultural nuances and social implications, echoes the findings of researchers like De Bellis & Johar (2020) Matthews et al. (2019), who asserted that understanding the cultural and social context of a language is integral to language learning.

The unique challenges associated with each language skill, as pointed out by the educators, are also well-documented in the literature. For instance, researchers have noted the demands of real-time language processing in listening comprehension (Al-Shamsi et al., 2020), the need for a nuanced understanding of cultural and idiomatic expressions in reading comprehension (Niño, 2020), the challenges in pronunciation, intonation, and fluidity in speaking (Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2022), the need for a firm command of language structure in writing (Hyland et al., 2022), and the importance of understanding the social and cultural context in pragmatic competence (Taguchi et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the teachers' insights regarding the importance of expanding learners' worldviews to facilitate their autonomy align with contemporary pedagogical perspectives. Researchers have emphasized that stimulating curiosity and motivation (Donaldson et al., 2021), providing a broader context for language learning (Feryok, 2020), understanding the real-world applicability of language skills (Qin et al., 2020), independent exploration of diverse language styles and genres (Reinhardt & Thorne, 2020), developing critical thinking skills (Toshpulatova & Kinjemuratova, 2020), and building confidence, openness, and a tolerance for ambiguity (Pawlak, 2022) are all conducive to autonomous language learning.

Lastly, the institutional barriers identified by the teachers, such as a traditional, teacher-centered approach, the emphasis on standardized testing, a lack of resources or opportunities for practice, a rigid curriculum structure, lack of teacher training in promoting learner autonomy, and policies that limit technology integration, have also been highlighted in the literature. For instance, researchers like Chang (2020), Coghlan et al. (2021), and Sahlberg (2021) have criticized the restrictive nature of traditional education and standardized testing, arguing that they inhibit autonomous learning. They have also noted the lack of resources and opportunities for practice, the rigidity of

curriculum structures, the lack of teacher training for promoting learner autonomy, and restrictive technology policies as significant challenges.

In conclusion, the perspectives shared by the six educators collectively highlight the multifaceted challenges that learners face in achieving language autonomy and the institutional barriers that need to be overcome to promote learner autonomy. At the same time, they underscore the potential benefits of broadening learners' worldviews as a means to foster autonomous learning. Their insights provide a valuable contribution to the ongoing discourse on learner autonomy in language education.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that promoting learner autonomy in language learning is a complex process that is influenced by a range of socio-cultural factors, including language skills, worldviews, and institutional structures. These factors present both unique and shared challenges that can limit learners' ability to engage in autonomous learning. Language skills, particularly listening comprehension, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, pragmatic competence, and vocabulary acquisition, are crucial for autonomous learning, but often lack adequate feedback and contextual understanding in such situations. Expanding learners' worldviews can facilitate learner autonomy by promoting curiosity, motivation, critical thinking, and a better understanding of the real-world relevance of language skills. However, institutional barriers such as a traditional approach to teaching, emphasis on standardized testing, lack of resources, rigid curriculum structure, lack of teacher training, and restrictive technology policies can limit the opportunities for self-directed learning.

The findings of this research imply that promoting learner autonomy in language learning requires adjustments in teaching strategies, curriculum design, and institutional policies. Pedagogically, teachers need to focus on diverse language skills. Curricula should be designed to expand learners' worldviews, stimulate curiosity, provide real-world applicability of language skills, and foster critical thinking. Institutionally, practices such as overemphasis on standardized testing, rigid curricula, and restrictive technology policies should be re-evaluated.

However, this study has a few notable limitations. Firstly, the sample size of six educators may not be representative of the broader population of educators and their perspectives on learner autonomy. Furthermore, the study focuses primarily on the views of educators, potentially neglecting the experiences and perspectives of the learners themselves, who may face additional barriers not identified by their teachers. The study also assumes that all learners strive for autonomy, which may not be the case for all individuals. Finally, the study does not measure the relative impact of each barrier on learner autonomy, which could provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors affecting learner autonomy.

Suggestions

Given the limitations of the present study, further research is needed to understand the socio-cultural barriers in promoting learner autonomy more comprehensively. Future studies should consider a larger and more diverse sample of educators to ensure the findings are representative. Incorporating the perspectives of learners could also provide valuable insights into the challenges they face in autonomous learning. Moreover, exploring the varying degrees of desire for autonomy among learners could lead to a more nuanced understanding of the concept. Finally, conducting quantitative studies to measure the relative impact of each barrier on learner autonomy could offer practical implications for educators and policy-makers in overcoming these barriers and promoting autonomous learning.

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