

# Autonomous English Language Learning Beyond the Classroom: Indonesian Tertiary Students' Practices and Constraints

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## Autonomous English Language Learning Beyond the Classroom: Indonesian Tertiary Students' Practices and Constraints

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**Abstract.** In response to the interest in learner autonomy in recent years, educational research has been increasingly paying attention to students' out-of-class autonomous learning activities. This study aims to (1) describe the extent to which Indonesian tertiary students engaged in autonomous English language learning outside the class, (2) explore their perceived constraints in practicing autonomous learning, and (3) examine whether there are any significant differences in the autonomous learning activities between female and male students and between the English major students and non-English major students. Employing the explanatory mixed-method design, a total of 402 first-year students completed a questionnaire, and 30 of whom were interviewed. The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests, and the interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results showed that the students did engage in several out-of-class English learning activities, however many of the activities were more receptive than productive. The interviews echoed the questionnaire results, and the students claimed that they were not autonomous in their learning due to several constraints. The results also revealed that there is no significant difference in the level of practice of autonomous out-of-class activities based on gender but a significant difference was found concerning majors of study. Practical implications for the Indonesian context are put forward.

**Keywords:** learner autonomy; out-of-class autonomous learning; perceived constraints; gender; majors of study

### 1. Introduction

Learner autonomy, which is often defined as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (Holec, 1981, p. 3), is increasingly regarded as an imperative in foreign language learning. An escalating interest in learner-centered approaches to language teaching, coupled with recent advancements in technology-based approaches, makes clear the point that learner autonomy is an essential element

in foreign language learning. In response to these trends, educational research is increasingly paying attention to students' out-of-class autonomous learning activities (Benson 2011).

Out-of-class language learning is often used to describe "non-prescribed activities that students carry out independently to broaden their knowledge of a subject" (Benson, 2011, p. 9). Unlike classroom discourse that tends to be structured and hierarchical involving simple rituals and routines as well as display language, discourse beyond the classroom is somewhat unstructured and its contexts of use generate multifaceted rituals and routines resulting in the authentic language (Nunan, 2014). Previous studies in a variety of contexts suggest that students' active engagement in language learning beyond the classroom leads to the improvement in learners' proficiency, confidence, motivation, along with intercultural awareness, and compensates limitations of classroom-based learning (Benson 2011; Nunan, 2014; Ushioda 2001; Yorozu, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> In any investigation into out-of-class English language learning, context is of essential consideration (Hyland, 2004). This is because learners of English take part in particular local contexts with particular practices that create English learning opportunities (Norton & Toohey, 2001, p. 311). In other words, a different learning context may provide learners with different learning experiences, including the amount of exposure to the target language. In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) like Indonesia, classroom teaching and learning may be the only venue where students have contact with English. Once the students leave the classroom, they are immersed in their first language environment, in which opportunities to use English in real settings are limited.

The challenges of English language teaching (ELT) in Indonesia have been well documented. Although many efforts have been made to improve ELT quality, including the introduction of different curricula, there still has been widespread dissatisfaction with the English achievements of Indonesian students (Dardjowidjojo, 2000; Madya, 2002; Marcellino, 2008; Nuh, 2013). Several studies argued that the continuing problems do not only stem from the curriculum but also from several other factors, such as limited time allocation for English instruction, students' lack of opportunity to use English out of the classroom, and lack of teacher's encouragement for students' participation in the classroom activities (Dardjowidjojo, 2000; Musthafa, 2001; Nur, 2004; Weda, 2018). It is widely accepted that in the Indonesian context, the amount of exposure to the target language, which is the most fundamental prerequisite of language acquisition (Rowland, 2014), is very limited. The total number of hours allocated for English instruction for the entire six-year period of secondary schools (junior high school and senior high school) is 720 hours (Mustafa, 2018) with no more than four contact hours per week (Yulia, 2014). To compensate for this limited number of hours, therefore, students need to extend their engagement in English language-related activities outside the classroom for more language exposure.

However, while learner autonomy requires students' acceptance of responsibility to take control of their learning (Benson, 2001), several studies on learner autonomy in the Indonesian context showed that Indonesian students' learning behavior is otherwise. In a study of secondary school students, Cirocki, Anam and Retnaningdyah (2019) found that many students were not familiar with the concept of learner autonomy. Based on their dependency on teachers, only 1.4% of the students appeared to be autonomous learners. The results also showed that the students had fairly low motivation to learn English and were not ready to act as autonomous learners due to a lack of typical competencies. At the university level, Hermagustiana and Anggriyani (2019) found that most students perceived that their teachers had a dominant role in controlling teaching and learning, which eventually led the students to become less autonomous both inside and outside the classroom. In an investigation of teachers' beliefs, Saraswati (2019) found that more than 80% of the teachers agreed that they were responsible for the teaching and learning process and less than 60% thought that their students' are autonomous learners. These results suggest that learner autonomy is an essential measure to pursue in the Indonesian context.

It is suggested in the literature, however, that the development of learner autonomy is a gradual and intricate process (Benson, 2011; Bliidi, 2017; Little, 2007). Learner autonomy is the product of an interactive process in which teachers gradually expand the scope of their learners' autonomy by gradually allowing them to take more control over their learning (Little, 2007, p. 26). Its intricacy derives from several factors, including culture, learner's beliefs, attitudes, motivation, and personality (Chen & Li, 2014). This suggests that the development of learner autonomy will likely be different from culture to culture and will depend on students' readiness to exercise autonomous learning, which may be reflected in their behaviors and beliefs. Thus, before any interventions aiming to promote learner autonomy are implemented, exploring students' practice of autonomous learning outside the class and perceived constraints they have in performing their learning is an important step to take. A better understanding of students' learning beyond the classroom can assist in the implementation of learner autonomy as a goal and make guidance given by teachers to learners more effective (Pearson, 2004). Based on this framework, the current research attempted to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent did Indonesian tertiary students engage in autonomous English language learning activities outside the class?
2. What perceived constraints did the students have in their autonomous learning outside the class?
3. Are there any statistically significant differences in the autonomous English language learning activities outside the class between females and males and between the students who are English majors and the students who are non-English majors?

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## 2. Literature Review

### Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy has been defined in many ways, indicating that it is a multidimensional concept whose meaning can take many different forms and be viewed from many different standpoints (Benson, 2001; Smith, 2008). The term 'learner autonomy' was first coined by Holec (1981), and he defined it as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p. 3). Since then, many definitions have arisen but researchers have not agreed on one straightforward definition that sufficiently describes the concept. Interestingly, learner autonomy has also been described in terms of levels and versions. Littlewood (1999), for example, proposed a two-level category of autonomy, i.e. 'proactive' and 'reactive' autonomy. The former refers to circumstances where learners are able to take charge - plan, monitor, and evaluate - of their own learning. The latter, the second level of autonomy, is "the kind of autonomy which does not create its own directions but, once a direction has been initiated, enables learners to organize their resources autonomously in order to reach their goal" (p. 75). Benson (1997) identified three versions of autonomy: technical, psychological, and political. Technical autonomy is defined as the act of learning a language outside the context of an educational institution and without the involvement of a teacher. In the psychological version, autonomy refers to an ability that allows learners to take more responsibility for their learning. The political version is related to control over the process and content of learning. The main concern in this version is "how to achieve the structural conditions that will allow learners to control both their own individual learning and the institutional context within which it takes place (Benson, 1997, p. 19).

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### Previous Studies on Out-of-class Learning

Over the last few decades, an increasing number of studies into students' out-of-class English language learning have been conducted. One earlier study was conducted by Chan, Spratt, and Humphreys (2002) with a group of tertiary students at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The results showed that the major out-of-class activities the learners engaged in were related to communication and entertainment, such as watching movies and television in English and using the internet. In a similar context, Hyland (2004) found that students spent considerable time on receptive activities such as listening and reading, rather than speaking and writing. In a study of 324 students, Wu (2012) found that the most frequently practiced activities are watching films and television, reading, and listening to English songs, music, and radio channels.

In a study involving 121 students at an English Language Institute in Saudi Arabia, Tamer (2013) found that watching English movies and listening to English songs were the top most frequently practiced activities among the students, followed by reading English signboards, watching TV in English, and using the internet in English. In the Turkish context, Inozu, Sahinkarakas and Yumru (2010) found that students most frequently practiced their English doing internet activities, such as e-mailing or chatting, listening to music, watching TV programs and movies, and reading books or magazines. In a similar context,

Orhon (2018) found that learners were mostly engaged in listening to songs in English, followed by watching TV programs, videos, or movies in English.

Maros and Saad (2016) conducted a study in the Malaysian context. The results showed that the participants preferred to learn English through watching television programs or movies and make use of tools mainly technology-affiliated in advancing themselves in the language. In a similar context, Hashim, Yunus, and Hashim (2018) found that listening to talk shows on the radio, watching TV shows, or seeing movies in the English language were the highest rated activities the students engaged in for improving their listening and speaking skills.

In the Indonesian context, very few studies on the issue of out-of-class English language learning have been published (e.g. Ardi, 2013; Muthalib, Ys & Mustafa, 2019; Sutiono, Saukah, Suharmanto & Oka, 2017) and each had a different focus from the present study in some ways. Ardi (2013) investigated the autonomous behaviors and out-of-class English language learning activities of 192 first-year university students. Muthalib et al. (2019) looked at the methods for language exposure outside the language classroom context among 50 first-year university students who were considered successful language learners as measured by their TOEFL scores. Sutiono et al. (2017) explored the out-of-class activities employed by six successful and three unsuccessful students of the English major. The present study is of significance as it attempted to fill the gaps in the projects mentioned above. Besides investigating students' autonomous learning beyond the classroom, it explored students' perceived constraints in practicing autonomous learning, the matters that have been little or not explored in previous research. Also, this study examined whether there are any statistically significant differences in the autonomous learning activities outside the class regarding gender and major of study. In terms of methodology, this study employed a mixed-methods approach and involved a larger number of participants. The participants were EFL students from four different institutions of higher education spreading over 20 majors of study.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### Design

To collect the data of this research, the explanatory mixed-methods design, which comprises a quantitative phase, followed by a qualitative phase, was employed. The explanatory design requires two different reciprocal phases beginning with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The overall purpose of this design is to be able to use the qualitative data collected in the second phase to help explain initial quantitative results.

#### Participants

The quantitative phase of the research involved 402 first-year students from four higher educational institutions in Jambi province, Indonesia; two institutions of Islamic studies, an institution of administrative studies, and an institution of economics studies. The participating students consist of 192 males and 210

females that spread over 20 major fields of study, 52 of whom were doing English major. The participants were about 18 to 20 years of age and were with different English proficiency levels. In the qualitative phase, 30 of the students were selected for interviews. To select the sample in the quantitative phase, both stratified sampling and purposive sampling were used. To obtain a representative sample of the whole population in terms of gender, the students from each of the majors were divided into two groups: male and female. After that, the males and females in each of the majors were randomly selected according to their proportion. The purposive sampling was used to include all the students of the English major in the sample to address one of the research purposes i.e. to examine if there were differences between the students of the English major and those of non-English majors in their autonomous English language learning activities outside the class. In the second phase of the study, 30 participants were selected from those who indicated their availability to take part in an interview in the consent forms. The selected participants had varied autonomous English language learning practices outside the class.

### **Research Instruments**

A questionnaire and interviews were used to collect the data. In the quantitative phase, a questionnaire adapted from Chan et al. (2002) was used. The adapted questionnaire consists of 22 items that explore students' autonomous English language learning activities outside the class. The participants rated their answers on a four-point scale ranging from 'never' to 'often'. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 purposefully selected participants to explore the perceived constraints they had in performing autonomous English learning outside the class.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Before deciding whether to participate in the study, all the participants were provided with an information form, which explains the purposes and benefits of the study. The students who agreed to participate in the study returned the signed consent forms. Before the administration of the questionnaire, the participants were requested to complete the questionnaire as honestly as they could. The students who were chosen for the interviews were contacted to make arrangements for the interviews. Before the interviews, the interviewees were also requested to be sincere and honest in answering the interview questions. To avoid miscommunication due to the low English proficiency level of the participants, the interviews were conducted in *Bahasa Indonesia*. Lopez, Figueroa, Connor and Maliski (2008) suggested that researchers' interviews should be conducted in the participants' preferred language so that they will have a clearer understanding of the issues under investigation. The interview was conducted in a quiet classroom to help maximize its quality. Each interview was planned to last about 15 minutes but some of the interviews lasted longer and each interview was audio-recorded as all the participants had consented to this.

### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained through the questionnaires were first organized into a suitable form for its analysis. Since the questionnaire items were closed-ended questions, steps proposed by Dörnyei (2010) were followed to process the

information. These steps include data check and cleaning, data manipulation, reduction of the number of variables, measurement of data reliability and validity, and statistical analyses. The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests with the help of SPSS. The data obtained through the interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis following the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Before the analysis was conducted, the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. After all the interview data were transcribed, the transcripts were rechecked to verify that there were no obvious mistakes made during the transcription process. Then, the analysis was conducted in the source language (*Bahasa Indonesia*). Pseudonyms were used in reporting the interview results to keep the anonymity of the participants.

#### 4. Findings

##### Autonomous English Language Learning Activities outside the Class

Table 1 shows the percentages of the students' responses to items probing their autonomous English learning activities outside the class. As shown in the table, 9 out of 22 activities appeared to be frequently ('often' or 'sometimes') practiced by more than half of the students. Meanwhile, 13 activities were infrequently ('never' and 'rarely') practiced.

Table 1: Students' autonomous English language learning activities outside the class

No.	Activities	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)
1.	Reading grammar books on your own	11.19	54.73	29.10	4.98
2.	Doing exercises which are not compulsory	11.44	36.07	36.82	15.67
3.	Noting down new words and their meanings	37.81	33.08	21.14	7.96
4.	Reading English notices around you	20.65	36.57	30.35	12.44
5.	Reading newspapers in English	6.72	20.40	37.06	35.82
6.	Sending e-mails in English	8.96	18.66	26.87	45.52
7.	Reading books or magazines in English	12.44	28.61	40.55	18.41
8.	Watching English TV programs	43.28	33.58	20.15	2.99
9.	Listening to English radio	7.21	17.66	32.59	42.54
10.	Listening to English songs	63.43	25.12	8.46	2.99
11.	Talking to foreigners in English	4.98	13.43	31.34	50.25
12.	Practicing using English with friends	19.65	38.06	32.84	9.45
13.	Doing English self-study in a group	13.93	31.09	39.30	15.67
14.	Watching English movies	61.69	26.37	9.20	2.74
15.	Writing a diary in English	6.97	15.42	26.37	51.24
16.	Using the internet in English	29.60	32.84	27.11	10.45
17.	Doing revision not required by the teacher	6.47	26.12	35.57	31.84
18.	Collecting texts in English (e.g. articles, brochures, labels, etc.)	12.69	23.38	35.07	28.86
19.	Going to see the teacher about your work	9.95	26.37	39.80	23.88
20.	Attending meetings in English	4.73	11.69	28.36	55.22
21.	Watching videos/DVDs/VCDs	45.77	28.86	18.91	6.47
22.	Reading English news online	15.67	27.61	35.32	21.39



The most frequently (often or sometimes) practiced activities are listed below in the order of frequency:

- Listening to English songs (88.55% 'often' or 'sometimes')
- Watching English movies (88.06% 'often' or 'sometimes')
- Watching English TV programs (76.86% 'often' or 'sometimes')
- Watching videos/DVDs/VCDs (74.63% 'often' or 'sometimes')
- Noting down new words and their meanings (70.89% 'often' or 'sometimes')
- Reading grammar books on your own (65.92% 'often' or 'sometimes')
- Using the internet in English (62.44% 'often' or 'sometimes')
- Practicing using English with friends (57.71% 'often' or 'sometimes')
- Reading English notices around them (57.22% 'often' or 'sometimes')

The students indicated that 'never' or 'rarely' engaged in the following activities:

- Attending meetings in English (83.58% 'never' or 'rarely')
- Talking to foreigners in English (81.59% 'never' or 'rarely')
- Writing a diary in English (77.61% 'never' or 'rarely')
- Listening to English radio (75.13% 'never' or 'rarely')
- Reading newspapers in English (72.88% 'never' or 'rarely')
- Sending e-mails in English (72.39% 'never' or 'rarely')
- Doing revision not required by the teacher (67.41% 'never' or 'rarely')
- Collecting texts in English (e.g. articles, brochures, labels, etc.) (63.93% 'never' or 'rarely')
- Going to see the teacher about your work (63.68% 'never' or 'rarely')
- Reading books or magazines in English (58.96% 'never' or 'rarely')
- Reading English news online (56.71% 'never' or 'rarely')
- Doing English self-study in a group (54.97% 'never' or 'rarely')
- Doing exercises which are not compulsory (52.49% 'never' or 'rarely')

The results in the interview confirm those obtained in the questionnaire, which indicated listening to music was the highest-rated activity. When asked whether the activity was done more to learn or just for fun, some of the students said that they did it for both, others said it was more for fun, and the rest claimed that they did it more for learning. Kartika and Ahmad, for example, said that they listen to music more for pleasure than a learning purpose. Kartika stated, '*Saya sering mendengarkan musik tapi hanya untuk hiburan saja. Saya hanya mendengarkan dan menikmati lagunya, tidak pernah menterjemahkan liriknya*' (I often listen to English songs but just for fun. I just listen and enjoy the songs, never translate the lyrics). A similar sentiment was that of Ahmad. He said, '*Saya cuma mendengarkan lagu bahasa Inggris sekedar untuk hiburan saja*' (I just listen to English songs for fun only). Shinta, on the other hand, said that she listened to music more for learning than for fun. She commented, '*Saya biasanya menterjemahkan lirik lagu yang saya dengarkan. Sering mendengarkan musik akan memudahkan saya menghafal liriknya*' (I usually translate the lyrics of the song I listen to. Listening to music frequently will allow me remembering the lyrics easier).

#### **Perceived Constraints in Performing Autonomous Learning outside the Class**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 selected students to ask about the constraints they had in performing autonomous learning outside the

class. First, the students were asked whether they considered themselves autonomous learners. A vast majority of the interviewed students admitted that they were not autonomous learners. When asked the reason for not exercising autonomous learning, the students gave various answers. Andika, for example, commented that he did not know how to learn autonomously. He said, *'Saya tidak tahu bagaimana belajar mandiri itu dilakukan'* (I don't know how autonomous learning should be done). Riana shared similar reasoning but added that she needed to learn how to learn autonomously from others. She commented, *'Saya masih belum mampu untuk belajar secara mandiri, saya masih ingin belajar dari orang yang lebih tahu daripada saya'* (I can't learn autonomously, I still need to learn from those who are more able than me).

Sintia, Rinjani, and Amanda shared another different reason, stating that English is hard to learn. As Sintia said: *'Ya jujur saja bagi saya Bahasa Inggris itu sangat sulit dipelajari. Tulisan dan bacaannya beda, tidak seperti Bahasa Indonesia'* (Frankly speaking, for me, English is very hard to learn. Unlike Bahasa Indonesia, English words are pronounced differently compared to how they are written). A similar opinion was given by Rinjani, saying, *'Saya kurang minat belajar bahasa Inggris. Saya tidak suka. Sudah pernah mencoba belajar seperti menghafal kosa kata, tapi sangat sulit, terutama pengucapannya'* (I am not interested in learning English. I just don't like English. I have tried to learn, like memorizing vocabulary, but I find it very difficult, especially pronunciation). Meanwhile, Amanda related this difficulty with English grammar. She commented, *'Salah satu alasan kenapa saya tidak belajar mandiri itu karena bahasa Inggris sangat sulit, terutama tenses-nya'* (One reason why I do not learn autonomously is that English is very difficult, especially its tenses).

Eko and Bambang remarked that they did not engage in autonomous English learning activities because they have limited time after class. Eko explained, *'Waktu saya sangat terbatas karena saya harus bekerja sepulang kuliah'* (I have very limited time because I have to work after class). For Bambang, much of his time after class was spent on some off-campus social activities. He said, *'...saya sangat sibuk diluar. Saya aktif dalam kegiatan-kegiatan sosial diluar kampus'* (...I am quite busy outside. I am active in the activities of social organizations outside the campus). For Melani, most of her time after class was used for helping her parents doing housework. However, she tried to learn English if she had spare time. She said, *'Meskipun saya sangat sibuk melakukan pekerjaan di rumah, kadang-kadang saya belajar bahasa Inggris bila saya punya waktu senggang disela-sela kesibukan'* (Although I am very busy at home doing housework, I sometimes study English if I have spare time in my busy days).

Another reason given by the students for not practicing autonomous learning outside the class was that learning resources were limited. This point was made by Budi who commented, *'Sumber belajar seperti buku sangat terbatas'* (Learning materials, such as books, are very limited). On this same matter, Eva remarked: *'...buku-bukunya terbatas... Dan juga, saya sulit mencari teman yang mau berdiskusi, belajar bersama, dan lain-lain'* (...the availability of books is limited... Also, it is very hard for me to find a friend who wants to discuss, study together, and so on).

Interestingly, out of 30 interviewed students, only few who thought that they were autonomous learners. Putri, for example, commented, *'Diluar kelas insya Allah saya dapat belajar bahasa Inggris sendiri. Saya merasa bahwa belajar dengan arahan dari orang lain sangat sulit. Namun bagi saya belajar sendiri itu lebih mudah'* (Outside the class, God willing I can learn English by myself. I feel learning through a guide is difficult. I found that learning English on my own is easier). Zaskia also believed that she had already undertaken autonomous learning. She said that although she did not have a class on campus, she often came and attended other courses. *'Saya sangat menyukai bahasa Inggris... Maksud saya, bersama teman, saya sering mengikuti kelas lain di jurusan Bahasa Inggris. Kami hanya duduk dan mengikuti pelajarannya. Menyenangkan dan kita dapat memperoleh pengetahuan baru karena kelasnya diajarkan oleh dosen yang berbeda'* (I really like English... I mean, with a friend of mine, I often attend other courses in the English major. We just sit and follow the lesson. I find it enjoyable and we can get new knowledge because the courses are taught by different teachers). These comments indicate that, although the majority of the students did not engage in autonomous learning after class, a small minority were determined to learn and find learning opportunities.

#### **Autonomous English Learning Activities outside the Class Concerning Gender and Majors of Study**

Two different Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted to examine if females (n=210) and males (n=192) and the students doing an English major and the students doing majors other than English differed in autonomous English learning activities outside the class (See Table 2 and Table 3).

**Table 2: Mann-Whitney U test results of the differences in students' perceptions of their autonomous English learning activities outside the class regarding gender (N=402)**

	Activities outside the class
Mann-Whitney U	18412.500
Female mean rank	209.82
Male mean rank	192.40
z-score	-1.502
p-value	.133

**Table 3: Mann-Whitney U test results of the students' autonomous English learning activities outside the class depending on major of study (N=402)**

	Activities outside the class
Mann-Whitney U	6222.500
English major mean rank	256.84
Non-English major mean rank	193.28
z-score	-3.682
p-value	.000

As can be seen in Table 2, there is no significant difference in the level of practice of autonomous out-of-class activities between female students (Mean rank = 209.82,  $n = 210$ ) and male students (Mean rank = 192.40,  $n = 192$ ),  $U = 18412.500$ ,  $z = -1.502$  (corrected for ties),  $p > .05$ , two-tailed. Meanwhile, as shown in Table 3, the level of practice of out-of-class activities of the English major students (Mean rank = 256.84,  $n = 52$ ) is significantly higher than that of the non-English major students (Mean rank = 193.28,  $n = 350$ ),  $U = 6222.500$ ,  $z = -3.682$  (corrected for ties),  $p < .05$ , two tailed.

## 5. Discussion

The first research question focused on the extent to which Indonesian tertiary students engage in autonomous language learning activities outside the class. As shown in the previous section, there were 9 out of the 22 activities appeared to be more frequently ('often' or 'sometimes') practiced by more than half of the students. In contrast, 13 activities that infrequently ('never' and 'rarely') practiced by more than half of the students.

It is interesting to note that the four activities that were 'often' practiced involve the use of technology. These results confirm the results obtained by Ardi (2013) in a study conducted in the Jakarta context, Indonesia, in which most of the widely practiced activities were also related to the use of technology. In terms of the type of activities, these results are consistent with the results achieved in several studies conducted in different contexts (e.g. Chan et al., 2002; Koçak, 2003; Pearson, 2004; Tamer, 2013), which have generally highlighted some similar out-of-class activities, and most of the activities involved receptive rather than productive activities.

It appears that the advancements of technology have provided the students with access to a variety of English programs and facilitated their engagement in language learning without the presence of a teacher. This was confirmed in the interviews where the students took advantage of the ease of access to technology for language skill practice and this was not only for entertainment purposes. The benefits of using technology for language learning have been endorsed in the literature. Kessler (2009) stated that technology provides opportunities for students to use language in authentic contexts. "Such activities encourage students to strive for autonomy in the target language" (p. 79). Quite evidently, the use of technology for out-of-class language learning is a means of enhancing students' exposure to the target language by providing opportunities for language practice in different contexts (Lai, Yeung & Hu, 2015). Furthermore, "Technology has the potential to not only provide access to resources for learning in a superficial sense but also to offer increased affordances for autonomous learning" (Reinders & White, 2011, p. 1). However, previous research has suggested that students lack a good understanding of how available technologies can be used effectively for language learning purposes (Lai et al., 2015). Therefore, it may be necessary for teachers to consider providing students with support on how to make the most of such resources for effective English learning.

The results of this study also showed that there were 13 activities in which more than half of the students said that they 'never' or 'rarely' practiced. One reason why some of the activities were infrequently practiced could be due to the limited access to the resources in students' living environment. For instance, the students are unlikely to find foreigners in their daily life with whom they can practice their English. They also have limited access to resources such as English newspapers or radio programs. Of note here is that the present study was conducted in two regencies in one of the many provinces in Indonesia where access to the resources such as English radio, English newspapers, and foreigners are scarce. The low frequency of participation in other activities such as attending meetings, writing a diary, sending e-mails, and reading books or magazines in English may indicate that these learning activities are also not a common part of students' learning experiences in this context.

Although the questionnaire results indicated that the students did engage in some out-of-class activities, the majority of the students in the interviews admitted that they were not autonomous. There was apparent conformity among them regarding the reasons why they did not practice autonomous learning. *Lack of capacity to learn autonomously* was one of the most mentioned reasons, and there was apparent agreement that they needed guidance from the teacher. Some of the students also commented that for them, *English is hard to learn*. This perceived difficulty of English influenced their attitude towards English and made them not interested to learn it. For several students, *time shortage outside the class* was regarded as another constraint to engaging in autonomous learning. Although an enormous amount of time is available after class, some students were using it for other activities, including work commitments, social organization, and doing housework. This suggests that the limited time is more due to the students' environmental factors than the workload they carry in their educational institutions. It may be interesting to note that although some of the students suggested that they had the intention to study after class, they had to help their parents do housework. This is very common in the Indonesian context, where children, especially women, are supposed to help their parents with in-house related work.

Some of the interviewees also mentioned that learning resources for English learning were limited. In this respect, the students mentioned that there were very few hard copy books available and a lack of interest from friends in studying together. In this regard, researchers have suggested that learning resources are indeed an essential element in developing learner autonomy. Zhao and Chen (2014) stated that materials play a pivotal role in developing and breeding learner autonomy, predominantly because they motivate learners for their English study. Dickinson (1987) believed that for learner autonomy to be exercised, materials need to be made available in a site where learners can have access to them.

The third question asked if there are any statistically significant differences in the autonomous English learning activities outside between females and males and between the students who are English majors and the students who are non-

English majors. The results of the analysis in the previous section showed that there is no significant difference in the level of practice of autonomous out-of-class activities between female students and male students. These results confirm the results obtained in Koçak's (2003) study done in a different cultural context. However, the results of the current research contradict those achieved by Varol and Yilmaz (2010), which showed that there were significant differences between female and male students in their autonomous learning activities outside the class in favor of females.

Regarding the majors of study, the results showed that the level of practice of out-of-class activities of the English major students is significantly higher than that of the non-English major students. These suggest that the students of the English major accept more responsibilities and engage more in autonomous English learning activities outside the class than the other group does. One possible explanation is that, unlike the students of non-English majors, the students of English majors are expected to have stronger motivation to learn English as they have chosen the career as English language teachers. English major students were students enrolled in a teaching degree which was preparing them to be English teachers. Thus, they assume greater responsibilities in their English learning compared to those of non-English majors. In this respect, it may be important to consider Locke and Latham's goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1994) which states that human activity is stimulated by purpose, and for action to happen, "goals have to be set and pursued by choice" (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 120). The goals, according to Dörnyei, are regarded as "the 'engine' to fire the action and provide the direction in which to act" (p. 120). In other words, while for non-English majors, the subject of English was a compulsory part of their degree, for English major, it was a personal choice or drive. This personal interest in the language might have fuelled their engagement in out of class learning activities and their adoption of taking more responsibilities towards their learning.

## 6. Conclusion and Limitations

The purpose of the present study was three folds: (1) to describe the extent to which Indonesian students engaged in autonomous language learning beyond the classroom, (2) to explore the students' perceived constraints in performing their autonomous learning, and (3) to examine whether there are any statistically significant differences in the autonomous English learning activities outside between females and males and between the students who are English major and the students who are non-English majors. The results showed that the students did engage in several out-of-class English learning activities; however many of the activities were more receptive than productive. In the interviews, the students claimed that they were not autonomous learners and offered several reasons for not exercising autonomous learning. The results also revealed that there is no significant difference in the level of practice of autonomous out-of-class activities between female students and male students, but there is a significant difference in the level of practice of autonomous out-of-class activities between English major students and non-English major students. All these findings formed the basis for offering recommendations for the

teaching and learning context. Since the teacher plays a vital role in the effort to promote learner autonomy, focusing on what the teacher can do to help students develop their autonomy is imperative.

The results highlighted that most of the activities the students frequently engaged in involved the use of technology. Therefore, teachers are expected to provide students with support on how to make the most of technology for effective English learning. The role of teachers could be in forms of encouragement, recommendations on which resources to use, tips on how to use the resources, advice on metacognitive and cognitive strategies, using technology in the classroom, and assigning homework involving the use of technological resources. Drawing the students' attention to the benefits of technology would be a step toward increasing their motivation in language learning and discovering a range of online resources that would likely trigger their excitement and interest, which in turn would lead to autonomous learning. Also, since social interaction is an integral part of the development of learner autonomy, teachers should encourage more social interaction and collaboration among students either inside or outside the classroom or both.

The results also showed that the students' perceived constraints in performing autonomous learning are both extrinsic and intrinsic. While some of the problems such as the shortage of time and learning resources are conditional on external factors, students' lack of capacity to learn autonomously and difficulties experienced in learning English can be addressed in the language learning classroom. Providing the students with training in autonomous learning and motivating them are critical initial steps that the teacher could take to support the students.

In the institutions of higher education, especially in the English teaching programs, training on learner autonomy should be given to pre-service teachers. They should be provided with the skills to promote learner autonomy and be given the first-hand experience of learner autonomy in their training. Rigorous training not only would enhance their autonomous ability for their learning as pre-service teachers but also improve their professional development giving them knowledge and skills they could apply in their teaching in the future. Additionally, since the development of learner autonomy is dependent upon the development of teacher autonomy, teachers should be autonomous themselves before they can give training to their students. Thus, the teachers who have inadequate knowledge of strategy training should update their knowledge and skills either through self-study or professional development programs.

As with any research, it is essential to acknowledge that the present study has some limitations. The first limitation is that the data were collected through student reporting, i.e. questionnaires and interviews. Using other types of instruments, such as observations and learner diaries, could give more detailed information about the students' autonomous English learning realities beyond the classroom. Secondly, the data were collected only from four out of many institutions of higher education in Indonesia and focused only on one

geographical area. The inclusion of more higher education institutions from different regions could increase the generalizability of the findings.

### Recommendations for Further Research

The present study provides a better understanding of Indonesian tertiary EFL students' out-of-class autonomous English learning and their perceived constraints in performing their English learning beyond the classroom. Moreover, it has identified some potential lines of inquiry that future research should explore. Future research should investigate English teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy, which will provide information on teacher readiness to promote learner autonomy. Future research could usefully explore the relationships between autonomous learning and other variables such as geographical areas, proficiency levels, socio-economic background, and personality traits to give a better picture of the factors that potentially affect learner autonomy. Future research could also extend its scope to younger students, such as those of junior and senior high school, to give a better understanding of students' perspectives on autonomous learning. More information on this topic could assist efforts to promote learner autonomy, implement appropriate tasks and strategies to promote it as early as possible.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

## Students' Questionnaire

Student Name:

Student Identification Number:

Major:

Sex (Please tick):  Male  Female**Please tick the appropriate box.**In this last academic year, **how often** have you:

	often	Sometimes	rarely	never
1. read grammar books on your own?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. done exercises which are not compulsory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. noted down new words and their meanings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. read English notices around you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. read newspapers in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. sent e-mails in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. read books or magazines in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. watched English TV programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. listened to English radio?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. listened to English songs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. talked to foreigners in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. practiced using English with friends?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. done English self-study in a group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. watched English movies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. written a diary in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. used the internet in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. done revision not required by the teacher?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. collected texts in English (e.g. articles, brochures, labels, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. gone to see the teacher about your work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. attended meetings in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. watched videos/DVDs/VCDs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. read English news online?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

1. To what extent do you consider yourself an autonomous learner? Explain your answer.
2. What constraints do you face in practicing autonomous learning outside the class?

# Autonomous English Language Learning Beyond the Classroom: Indonesian Tertiary Students' Practices and Constraints

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