

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions of the research's main points and addresses the research's recommendations, pedagogical implications, the study's limitations, and suggestions for further research.

5.1 Conclusions

The purpose of the current study was to identify practices and challenges of learner autonomy in an Islamic Boarding School in West Sumatera. Specifically, this study sought to identify two primary objectives. As mentioned in the first chapter of this study, there are two aims this research is intended to answer. The first aim is to find out practices of learner autonomy implemented by students in an Islamic boarding school context, and the second one is to identify the challenges encountered by learners in implementing autonomous learning. The qualitative approach was used in this research to achieve these goals.

Concerning the first study's aim, the study's findings showed that the five high-achieving EFL students as the participants in this study implemented a variety of autonomy practices, as seen by their attitudes and behaviors in learning English. The findings also indicate that the students are capable of being autonomous learners depicted by characteristics they possess seen from Joshi's (2011) framework of autonomous learners: learners' perceptions of the teacher's roles and their own roles in learning English, learners' self-awareness, learners' self-efforts, learners' self-esteem, and learners' motivation.

Based on the findings and discussions related to the practice of autonomy carried out by students, it can be concluded that although students already have the characteristics of autonomous learners and are able to become autonomous learners, this does not sideline the roles of teachers in the process of their English learning. In fact, teachers are recognized by students as the main source that helps them learn and makes them autonomous learners. However, despite the characteristics of autonomy possessed by students, the efforts made by students to

be autonomous in learning are still not optimal due to the challenges discussed below related to the results of the second study objective.

Related to the second study's purpose, to identify challenges the students face in being autonomous learners, the results of the study indicate that from the four aspects of challenges researched in this study: challenges concerning the school, the teacher, the learners themselves, and the learning culture, students are aware that some school rules and limitations in terms of school facilities such as limited available books in the library serve as hinders to limit their efforts in learning. Overcoming these barriers could potentially unlock their greater potential for autonomous learning and lead to improved performance in autonomy. In addition, students are also aware that their weaknesses in learning English which stems from their personalities can limit their great potential to be autonomous.

To overcome the first challenge, following various English programs offered by the school is how learners maximize their involvement in English activities. In addition, the presence of supportive and creative English teachers has been able to encourage them to see the positive side of the challenges that exist, so that they are able to practice autonomous behaviors in learning English. Notwithstanding, it is also indisputable that certain factors, such as a lack of student handbooks and inadequate time spent learning English outside of the classroom, have impacts on the development of learner autonomy. Concerning those constraints, those performing at a high level in English find the material less challenging, as they have already mastered nearly all of its content. In connection with the issue of limited opportunities to learn English outside the classroom, providing students with more dedicated time and space to practice their English outside of the classroom can significantly enhance their proficiency in the language and foster greater autonomy. Furthermore, students did self-evaluation to anticipate their psychological weaknesses in learning English and to overcome the second challenge. Regarding this challenge, students' psychological factors affecting their English learning need to be addressed.

5.2 Implications

This current research presents descriptions on students' practices of autonomy and the challenges they encounter in doing autonomous activities, taking place in an Islamic boarding school setting in West Sumatera. Based on the results of the study, practices of autonomous attitudes were performed by the students, yet the practices were not optimally implemented due to challenges related to the school facilities and policy. Therefore, these results can serve as inputs for school policymakers and other stakeholders in improving the promotion of learner autonomy in English learning. Furthermore, facilities in the schools, such as available English books in the library, should be improved to balance the school rules and Islamic values which restrict students from using technological tools in learning English both inside and outside the classroom.

In relation to the teacher's roles, it is expected that the English teacher in this study context employs a more creative and supportive English learning environment which supports students to have reflection activities. This implication stems from students encountering internal challenges that constrain their effective engagement in autonomous activities. Hence, it is suggested that the teacher encourages more reflection activities in order to help students autonomously learn to their greater potentials so that the characteristics of being autonomous learners can be the habit for the students. Furthermore, since learner autonomy is emphasized in Indonesia's national curricula, professional development programs for teachers should stress more on teaching strategies encouraging learner autonomy promotion and critical thinking skills so that the students are empowered to take ownership of their learning journey.

5.3 Limitations

The present study, while valuable in the practices and challenges of learner autonomy among EFL students in an Islamic boarding school setting, has limitations. The main focus on finding out students' voices and points of view provides a nuanced understanding of how students perform characteristics of autonomous learners and what challenges they encounter in being autonomous in the process of learning English. The perspectives of school administrators and

teachers, however, were not yet thoroughly explored. Including these perspectives could offer a more comprehensive view of the educational environment and its impact on student autonomy.

In addition, the participation in this study was focused on high-achieving students, whose results benefit that the practice of autonomous activities adopted by these students could serve as valuable input and insights to be applied for middle and low-achieving learners. Notwithstanding, investigating the perspectives and experiences of students across all levels would provide a broader and more diverse understanding of learners' autonomy practices, highlighting how different levels of achievement influence learner autonomy practice. This approach would help identify specific needs and strategies for fostering autonomy among students with varying levels of academic performance, leading to more tailored and effective educational interventions.

5.4 Recommendations

Drawing from the insights gained in this study, several recommendations can be proposed for this research itself, students, teachers, schools, and future research. Related to this study itself, it is recommended that the researcher investigates this chosen topic by employing a different methodological approach, such as employing a mixed-method design. This method would enable a more thorough understanding of learner autonomy in the context of Islamic boarding schools by utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. It is also recommended that participants come from various academic backgrounds, such as high achievers, middle achievers, and low achievers. This variety would provide a broader range of perspectives and experiences related to how learner autonomy is practiced in Islamic boarding schools. High achievers may share insights into successful tactics they employ on their own, while middle and low achievers may offer insightful commentary on the difficulties they encounter and the assistance they require to become autonomous.

In terms of recommendations for students, it is advisable that students, as the main agents in the learning process, take responsibility and exert full control over their learning to engage in autonomous activities effectively. Additionally,

students are encouraged to engage in self-evaluation and reflection throughout their learning processes. This approach allows them to identify challenges in achieving autonomy and communicate them to various stakeholders such as peers, parents, teachers, and the school. As a result, challenges faced by students can be addressed to enhance the effective implementation of learner autonomy.

For teachers, the above-mentioned student actions require teachers to provide comprehensive and supportive guidance. Teachers need to act as guides, counselors, and facilitators for their students, especially when it comes to developing habits that support autonomy. This position entails creating an atmosphere in which learners are encouraged to take charge of their own learning and decision-making. To encourage students to develop effectively and sustainably in those practices, teachers should also offer constructive feedback in addition to structured opportunities for autonomy practice. This method not only helps students become more adept at self-directed learning, but it also gives them a sense of accountability and empowerment for their academic endeavors.

For schools, it is advised that schools adopt procedures and policies that foster learner autonomy in all student levels. This entails utilizing pedagogical approaches and curriculum design to incorporate autonomy-promoting strategies. It is also essential to give teachers opportunities for professional development so they can improve the way they support learner autonomy. Furthermore, fostering school environments where autonomous learning and initiative-taking are valued and encouraged can have a big impact on students' overall growth and academic achievement. Prioritizing learner autonomy as a fundamental component of education helps schools better equip students to overcome challenges and thrive in a variety of learning settings.

For future research, since perspectives of school administrators and teachers were not yet explored in this study, a more thorough grasp of the variables influencing learner autonomy in this context would have been provided by adding viewpoints from school administrators and teachers, which would have enhanced the future research in the field. In light of the research findings indicating that challenges of practicing autonomy in learning English mainly come from the school policy, the perspectives of school administrators and

teachers would have made it possible to conduct a more thorough investigation on how outside variables interact with the unique qualities of each student to either support or obstruct the promotion of learner autonomy.

Furthermore, the participation in this study was focused on high achieving students, whose results suggest that the practice of autonomous activities adopted by these students could serve as valuable input and insights to be applied for middle and low achieving learners. However, future research exploring learner autonomy practices and challenges, involving students across various achievement levels—high, middle, and low achievers—is recommended. This approach aims to gain a deeper understanding of students' perspectives and experiences across different levels, thereby facilitating the maximal development of learner autonomy for all students.