

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

This chapter concludes the main points of the research, and discusses the originality of the study, the contributions of the study to conclude the dissertation. Then, the limitations, implications, and further research are presented.

#### **5.1. Conclusions**

The present study was conducted to investigate learner autonomy in Indonesian context and its relationships with English proficiency. Specifically, this study investigated the degree of autonomy that undergraduate students exhibit while learning English as a foreign language and aspects of learner autonomy which best predict students' English proficiency. Moreover, this study also explored the ways they learn English autonomously in the classroom based on four aspects of learner autonomy, namely technical, psychological, political, and social-cultural (Benson, 1997 and Oxford, 2003). To arrive at these aims, the mixed methods approach was employed in this research. Then, SPSS 22.0 and Structural Equation Modeling- Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) were employed to analyze quantitative data, while thematic analysis was employed for analyzing qualitative data.

The results of the study indicated that undergraduate students were at a mediate level of autonomy. It signifies that the undergraduate students have the ability to learn autonomously. For the technical dimension, long-term goal and the ability to create opportunities to learn contributed to the students' level autonomy. Setting goals made learners more motivated, autonomous, and self-regulated. The psychological dimension obtained the highest score. It implies that undergraduate students had intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in learning English. They also pay attention to their cognitive process and they can control their affective in the learning process. The political-philosophical dimension shows the necessity of the negotiation process between teachers and students on the goals in learning and the freedom to decide the

learning content and activities. Related to the sociocultural dimension, the most important point was collaborative learning. Students develop their autonomy through social interactions with their friends. It suggests that social interactions are crucial to constructing learner autonomy. Although most students claimed that they were autonomous learners, they sometimes still need motivation, direction, and guidance from the teacher to practice autonomous learning outside the classroom. They need their teachers' assistance to build up their self-confidence and capability to perform autonomous learning. This reflects on the important role of the teacher to guide and assist the students to gain awareness of independent learning out of the classroom (Lee, 1998). In a similar vein, Swatevacharkul & Boonma (2020) mention that the presence of the lecturer is vital in the process of cultivating learner autonomy.

The undergraduate students understood the basic concept of learner autonomy as learning independently outside the classroom with teachers' help or working together with others. Learner autonomy is also defined as independent learning in which the students take full responsibility for the process of learning, and take initiative to find and learn other material. Besides, learner autonomy is students' awareness to deepen their knowledge and have learning goals. In addition, the students approved the importance of student-teacher negotiation on the learning process and the teacher has the authority to assist, guide, and support students to do some aspects of learning management. The undergraduate students also understood that learning autonomously gives them some advantages. For instance, improving their English skills, developing their potential, increasing their knowledge, and compensating for a limited time in the classroom and inadequate learning material. In addition, learner autonomy made students learn more personalized and creative.

The variables in this research model had a very good relationship. The results of hypothesis testing indicated that the technical, psychological, and political variables had a positive and significant effect on English proficiency whereas the socio-cultural variables did not show either a positive or significant influence on English proficiency. Moreover, the results of qualitative analysis showed that learner autonomy was

effective in the improvement of students' English proficiency. All students stated that learner autonomy could improve their English language proficiency. They practiced a lot of listening, speaking, reading, and writing outside the class. It signifies that they were interested in learning English out of class. Little (2007) emphasizes that the development of learner autonomy and the growth of language proficiency is mutually supportive and fully integrated. In other words, learner autonomy is seen as a tool and ultimate goal in learning. This means that students who can take the initiative, strive to learn and know how to organize and regulate their learning, they get good results and are successful in learning English.

## **5.2. Pedagogical Implications**

There are important practical implications for teaching and learning English at the tertiary level. First, teachers need to know the level of autonomy of students at the beginning of the academic period. It aims to help teachers plan their teaching and enable the students to be more independent in their learning (Myartawan et al., 2013). As a result, the students become effective and efficient learners (Benson, 2013). Second, teachers must be able to foster students' independence by helping students in setting learning goals, making lesson plans, using and monitoring learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes to the improvement of language proficiency (Benson, 2001). It can be said that students still need more training on planning, monitoring, and evaluating metacognitive skills to develop learner autonomy and achieve higher levels of English proficiency (Cohen, 2014; Nguyen & Gu, 2013; Wenden, 2001). Enhancing learners' awareness of autonomy through learner training is a great preliminary step. Training learners on some autonomy skills would be a crucial aspect of the development of learner autonomy. Next, students and teachers need to recognize the importance of motivation and learning strategies in promoting learner autonomy and enhancing language skills. Finally, since learner autonomy can predict language proficiency, teachers need to shift their dominant role in the

classroom. By giving the students sufficient autonomy, they gradually become autonomous learners.

### **5.3. The Originality of this study**

Learner autonomy in English language learning has attracted the attention of many experts and researchers. However, most of them have focused on the investigation of teachers' and students' practice of learner autonomy, the factors affecting students' learner autonomy, and students' readiness towards learner autonomy. Not the same with those studies, this present study was conducted to investigate undergraduate students' degree of learner autonomy viewed from four dimensions of learner autonomy: technical, psychological, political-philosophical, and sociocultural (Benson, 1997 and Oxford, 2003) and its relationships to English proficiency. Based on the results of readings conducted by the researcher, there were very few studies in Indonesia that attempted to research the relationship of learner autonomy and students' English proficiency. Therefore, a study on the relationship between learner autonomy and English proficiency in the Indonesian EFL setting is becoming demanding. The novelty of the present study is presented as follows.

First, the study employed Structural Equation Modeling- Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) to test the relationship between several independent and dependent variables in this research model. Smart PLS 3.0 software application version 3.2.7 was utilized to find out the correlations among four aspects of learner autonomy (technical, psychological, political-philosophical, and sociocultural) and language proficiency. The review of previous studies showed that the majority of studies adopted correlation or multiple regression analysis for identifying the relationships between learner factors and proficiency. Basically, this methodology is useful in identifying linear or one-to-one relationships between variables, but they are less effective in identifying complex relationships.

Second, the construction of a conceptual framework of the study was also original. It identified the causal relationships between exogenous variables (learner autonomy) and endogenous variables (English language proficiency). Learner autonomy is considered as the crucial factor affecting the level of language proficiency (Nguyen, 2008; Dafei, 2007; Myartawan et al., 2013; Little, 2007; Sakai & Takagi, 2009). Learner autonomy is a multi-dimensional concept (Benson, 1997). There are four dimensions of learner autonomy that are used in this study (Benson, 1997 & Oxford, 2003). They are technical, psychological, political, and sociocultural perspectives. The four dimensions are called exogenous variables, and the endogenous variable is English language proficiency which is developed with four indicators, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Last, the data collection instruments in this study were questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Many previous studies used only questionnaires and interviews (Spratt et al., 2002; Chan et al., 2002; Balcikanli, 2010; Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2011; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Nguyễn Thanh Nga, 2014; Murase, 2015; Keuk & Heng, 2016; Lengkanawati, 2016, 2017; Cheng, 2019; Cirocki et al., 2019; Khotimah et al., 2019; Fauzi et al., 2020; Swatevacharkul & Boonma, 2021). The observation method was used in the present study to provide more evidence of students' autonomous learning.

#### **5.4. Limitations of the study**

First, the participants only cover the students from a state university in Bandung, Indonesia, so the results are limited to the university only, and thus by no means are generalized to all universities in Indonesia.

Second, the length of class observation was limited due to the campus being locked down. Overall, there were five meetings of the teaching and learning process observed. Class observations should be carried out more than five times so that the data obtained is richer.

Third, the data of the present study were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observation. Collecting data employing other types of instruments such as learner diaries, classroom recordings, and portfolios could have given more detailed information about the students' autonomous English learning realities.

### **5.5. Recommendation for Future Research**

The present study was conducted to investigate the undergraduate students' level of autonomy and its relationships to English Proficiency at a state university in a province in Indonesia. It would be meaningful for researchers to include a bigger range of universities from different areas in Indonesia to get a comprehensive picture of students' autonomous English learning. The data were gathered only from students learning English. Future study is also needed to investigate English teachers' method to develop learner's autonomy. Particularly a certain method which is helpful for learners to learn effectively in facing education 4.0.