

Do Autonomous Learners Make Autonomous Teachers?: A Comparison of Distance and On-Campus ELT Students

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Abstract: *Teacher education programs should provide language teacher candidates with enough information and experience of autonomous learning because the more teacher candidates experience autonomy in their own training process, the better promoters of learner autonomy they will be when they become language teachers. The studies that focus on the connection between teacher education and learner autonomy are limited. The purpose of the study reported in this paper was to investigate whether language teacher candidates who were likely to experience more autonomy in their teacher education process have more positive views of learner autonomy as compared to teacher candidates who were likely to follow a less autonomous teacher education process. More specifically, the study compared two groups of English language teacher candidates' perceptions related to learner autonomy. One of these groups followed an on-campus ELT (English Language Teaching) program whereas the other group followed the distance version of the same program. Results of the study indicated that when compared to the students of the on-campus program, students of the distance program attributed more responsibility to English language learners in different aspects of the language learning process, and they also had more positive perceptions related to language learners' abilities to act autonomously.*

Keywords: *learner autonomy, autonomous learning, language teacher education*

1. INTRODUCTION

The term autonomy denotes a significant measure of independence from the control of others. In general educational settings autonomy can be defined as a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action (Little, 1991). Cognitive and humanistic views of learning put a focus on the necessity to develop learner autonomy, with the aim of helping students process information in meaningful ways and become independent learners with the effective use of learning strategies, transfer skills, and a sense of responsibility (Raya & Fernandez, 2002).

The term learner autonomy has sometimes been used interchangeably with some other concepts such as self-access learning and self-directed learning. However, those two concepts are different from learner autonomy, and they cannot be used interchangeably with the term. Reinders (2000) defines self-access learning as the learning which takes place in a self-access center; a self-access center consists of a number of resources (materials, activities, help) in one place and learners study in that center with the supervision of a counselor; also, self-directed learning is a learner-initiated process, in this process the decision to study lies with the learner. Although both of these concepts include independence and autonomy in their implementation, the concept of learner autonomy referred in this study is different from the concepts of self-access and self-directed learning.

Emphasizing the importance of language learning specific issues in learner autonomy, Esch (1997) states that "it is necessary to consider whether language has specific features which need to be taken into consideration when we talk about autonomous language learning. Is language learning different from any other learning, say physics or geography? The answer is yes because we use language to describe and talk about our learning experience. In any community language constitutes a powerful vehicle for culturally transmitted views of language, of learning and of learning situations (p. 166)." Specifically referring to the meaning of the term in foreign language learning, Holec (1981) defines learner autonomy as the ability to take charge of one's own

learning. This definition is considered an origin of current debates on learner autonomy (Schmenk, 2005) but many other researchers elaborated this original definition. Benson (2001) defines learner autonomy as the capacity to take control over, or responsibility for, one's own learning. Benson also adds that that control or responsibility may take a variety of forms in relation to different levels of the learning process. Benson and Voller (1997, p.1-2) suggested that the word 'autonomy' is used at least in five different ways in language education: for situations in which learners study entirely on their own, for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning, for an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education, for the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning, and for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning. Benson (1997) argues that current applied linguistics discourses have at least three versions of learner autonomy: in 'technical' version, learner autonomy is defined simply as an act of learning a language outside the framework of an educational institution and without the intervention of a teacher; in 'psychological' version, learner autonomy is defined as a capacity which allows learners to take more responsibility for their own learning; and in 'political' version, learner autonomy refers to the concept in terms of control over the processes and content of learning.

Listing the characteristics of autonomous learners, Dickinson (1993) states that, first of all, although quite a lot of learners actually do not know what is going on in their classes, autonomous learners are able to identify what has been taught. Secondly, they are able to formulate their own learning objectives in collaboration with the teacher, or as something that is in addition to what the teacher is doing. As the third characteristic, they can select and implement appropriate learning strategies consciously, and they can monitor their own use of learning strategies. In addition, those students are able to identify strategies that are not working and not appropriate for them. They can use other strategies because they have a relatively rich repertoire of strategies, and have the confidence to eliminate those that are not effective and try something else. Monitoring their own learning and self-assessment are the other two important characteristics of autonomous learners.

Cotterall (1995, p.199) states that "autonomous learners not only monitor their language learning, but also assess their efforts,... it is essential that learners be able to evaluate the quality of their learning. An appreciation of their abilities, the progress they are making and of what they can do with the skills they have acquired is essential if learners are to learn efficiently." In addition, Cotterall suggests that autonomous learners are likely to overcome the obstacles which educational background, cultural norms and prior experience may have put in their way. Sheerin (1997) states that the activities involved in autonomous learning should include analyzing needs, setting objectives, planning a program of work, choosing materials and activities, working unsupervised, and evaluating progress.

All these arguments about the characteristics of autonomous learners bring us to the issue of promoting learner autonomy in the language classroom. Bertoldi, Kollar and Ricard (1988) state that a student does not become an autonomous learner over-night. Students generally do not think much about how they learn, they are not aware of their own learning processes. However, when they are given the chance of making choices, and responsibility of their own learning, the awareness grows fast. When students are introduced to the process of taking more responsibility, there may be surprise, resistance, or confusion, but when they get started, many learners develop original, innovative techniques to approach their own language learning, autonomy develops in a rewarding process.

There are different approaches to fostering learner autonomy in the language learning process and one of them is the teacher-based approach. This approach emphasizes the role of the teacher and teacher education in the practice of fostering autonomy among learners (Benson, 2001). Voller (1997) suggests three basic teacher roles in autonomous learning: facilitator, in which teacher provides support for learning; counselor, in which there is one-to-one interaction with the learner; and resource, in which teacher is the source of knowledge and expertise. Crabbe (1993) points out two different domains of learning: public domain and private domain. Shared classroom activities take place in the public domain of learning; whereas, learner's personal learning activities take place in the private domain. If a teacher aims to foster autonomy, his/her focus of attention should

be on both of these domains and the interface between them. That is, teachers should always consider what learning activity the learner is transferring from the public domain to private domain, and vice versa.

Scharle and Szabo (2000) suggest three gradual stages teachers should take into consideration while promoting learner autonomy. The first stage is raising awareness: in this stage teachers present new view-points and new experiences to the learners in order to make them aware of the concept of taking more control on their own language learning process. The next step is changing attitudes: in this stage teachers try to make students practice skills introduced at the first stage, and in this way they try to help learners get accustomed to taking more responsibility. And the final stage is transferring roles: in this stage there occurs a considerable change in the roles of the teacher and learners in the classroom.

Another important aspect of teacher-based approaches to promoting learner autonomy focuses on language teacher training. Little (1995) discusses the importance of promoting learner autonomy in future language teachers' education. Emphasizing the dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy, Little argues that "genuinely successful teachers have always been autonomous in the sense of having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising via continuous reflection and analysis the highest possible degree of affective and cognitive control of the teaching process, and exploiting the freedom that this confers (p. 179)." In other words, Little suggests that in order to be a good promoter of learner autonomy, first of all the teacher himself or herself must be autonomous; and therefore, learner autonomy must be a part of teacher education. This can happen in two senses: "we must provide trainee teachers with the skills to develop autonomy in the learners who will be given into their charge, but we must also give them a first-hand experience of learner autonomy in their training (p. 179)."

Little (1995) suggests that future teachers of English can be provided with some information related to importance and fostering of learner autonomy, but that would not be enough unless they are provided with the opportunities of feeling learner autonomy themselves in their own learning process. Little states that "language learners are more likely to operate as independent flexible users of their target language if their classroom experience has already pushed them in this direction, by the same token, language teachers are more likely to succeed in promoting learner autonomy if their own education has encouraged them to be autonomous (p. 180)."

All the aforementioned arguments may bring us to the following conclusions: (a) learner autonomy is a desirable concept in the language teaching/learning contexts, (b) teachers have a vital role in promoting learner autonomy, (c) teacher education programs should provide language teacher candidates with enough information and experience of autonomous learning because the more teacher candidates experience autonomy in their own training process, the better promoters of learner autonomy they will be when they become language teachers. The studies that investigated the final conclusion in the previous sentence are limited. Thus, the purpose of the study reported in this paper is to investigate whether language teacher candidates who were likely to experience more autonomy in their teacher education process have more positive views of learner autonomy as compared to teacher candidates who were likely to follow a less autonomous teacher education process. More specifically, this study compares two groups of English language teacher candidates' perceptions related to learner autonomy. One of these groups followed an on-campus B.A. in ELT (English Language Teaching) program whereas the other group followed the distance version of the same program.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 220 Turkish students studying at Anadolu University, B.A. in ELT programs. Anadolu University offers two different ELT programs which give the graduates the same diploma with the same rights and privileges. Both of these programs are four-year B.A. programs educating English language teachers, but one of the programs is offered on-campus for all four years whereas the other program is a combination of on-campus and distance education where the students complete the first two years of the program on-campus and the final two years as distance education students (this program will be referred as 'the distance program' in the rest of this paper). The programs offer similar courses especially in the final two years but the on-

campus students take those courses in formal classroom settings with an instructor whereas the distance students are provided with the course materials and they study themselves by regulating their own learning and take the exams on scheduled dates. The distance students have the opportunities of getting help by using supplementary materials and online tools, or by attending some private courses, but they never follow the courses on a weekly basis under the supervision of a university instructor. Considering the difference between the structures of the two programs, it can be argued that the students of the distance program need to experience more autonomy in their teacher education process as they have to regulate their own learning for all the courses they take in the final two years of the program.

The participants of this study were 110 on-campus and 110 distance students who were at the end of their fourth year in the program. The data of the study were collected towards the end of the spring semester in the final year in the program, which means the participants were about to graduate and become English language teachers at the time of data collection. Teaching experience was an important factor which needed to be controlled in the study. As a requirement of their Teaching Practicum course, fourth year students of both programs go to public schools for teaching at least one hour a week; apart from teaching practicum, some students also teach at private language courses especially in the last year of the program. Table 1 provides information about the gender, teaching experience, age, and GPA of the participants. These variables were included in the study as control variables because they were considered as possible factors that may affect the participants' perceptions related to autonomy.

Table1. *Descriptive Statistics Related to Participant Characteristics (N = 220)*

| Program Type | n | Gender | | Experience | | Age | | GPA | |
|--------------|-----|------------|----------|--------------------|-------------------------|-------|------|-------|------|
| | | Female (n) | Male (n) | Only Practicum (n) | Practicum+ Tutoring (n) | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Distance | 110 | 75 | 35 | 62 | 48 | 25.08 | 2.36 | 75.12 | 8.78 |
| On-campus | 110 | 68 | 42 | 77 | 33 | 23.10 | 1.09 | 73.33 | 8.54 |

2.2. Instrument

In investigating views related to learner autonomy, it is considered useful to focus on views related to learner and teacher responsibilities in the language learning process, and views related to language learners' abilities to act autonomously (Chan, 2003; Spratt, Humphreys & Chan, 2002; Chan, Spratt & Humphreys, 2002; Benson, 2001; Chan, 2001; Reinders, 2000; Victori & Lockhart, 1995).

The instrument used in this study was adapted from a questionnaire developed by Chan, Spratt and Humphreys (2002) to investigate language learners' readiness for learner autonomy. The adapted questionnaire focused on investigating language learners' perceptions related to learner autonomy by asking questions in two sections about the participants' perceptions of learner responsibilities in the language learning process, and their perceptions of learner abilities to act autonomously. Section 1 of the questionnaire focused on learner responsibilities and asked 13 questions to the participants about how much responsibility language learners have in different aspects of the language learning process such as making sure students make progress during lessons or outside class, stimulating their interest in English, identifying their weakness in English, deciding on the objectives and materials of a course, evaluating their learning and the course, or deciding what they learn outside class. The participants answered the questions on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely). Section 2 of the questionnaire focused on learner abilities and asked 11 questions to the participants about how they evaluate language learners' abilities to act autonomously in different situations such as choosing learning activities and materials in or outside class, choosing learning objectives, evaluating their own learning or the course, or regulating their own learning in or outside class. The participants answered the questions on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good).

For ensuring the validity of the instrument for this particular research context, expert opinion was taken from eight university professors in the field of foreign language teacher education who were all familiar with the research context. For internal reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha was calculated and found to be .833, which indicates high internal consistency (reliability) for this administration of the instrument.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The data for the study were collected at the end of the spring semester in 2013-2014 academic year. It was late May when the data were collected and the students in both programs were studying the last couple of weeks in their programs. The students of the on-campus program answered the questionnaire in their class time whereas the students of the distance program answered an online version of the questionnaire. Only the volunteering students participated in the study and they were not asked to give their names in order to ensure anonymity.

After collecting the data, three different scores were calculated for each participant of the study. The first calculated score was the overall score the participant got from the questionnaire. Since there were 24 questions which were answered on a five-point scale in the questionnaire, the highest possible overall score was 120 and the lowest one was 24, higher scores indicating more positive views on learner autonomy. After finding the overall score for each participant, the scores based on two different sections of the questionnaire were also calculated. There were 13 questions in the first section, which means that the highest possible score was 80 and lowest one was 13; and there were 11 questions in the second section, with a highest possible score of 55 and the lowest possible score of 11, in both sections higher scores were indicating more positive views on learner autonomy.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis was used as the main data analysis method in this study. Three different multiple regression models were used for analyzing the data, one model for each calculated score from the questionnaire. The dependent variables used in the regression models were the overall score from the questionnaire, and the scores from the first and second sections. The independent variables used in each regression model were the same, and they were entered into the model in the same order: gender, age, GPA, teaching experience, and program type. In each regression model, program type were entered into the model as the last independent variable in order to see the unique effect of studying in the on-campus or distance programs above and beyond the other four independent variables. Gender, GPA, and program type were dichotomous variables and the following dummy codes were used when the data related to these variables were being entered into the statistical analysis software (SPSS, version 20): 0 was used for female, only practicum, and distance program levels; 1 was used for male, practicum + tutoring, and on-campus levels. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients and independent-samples t-test were also used in order to better interpret the results of the Hierarchical Multiple Regression analyses.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 presents the correlation matrix of the dependent variables used in data analysis and the program type of the participants.

Table 2. *Correlation Matrix – Program Type and Dependent Variables*

| | Overall Score | Section 1 Score | Section 2 Score | Program Type |
|---|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Overall Score | - | | | |
| Section 1 Score | .926* | - | | |
| Section 2 Score | .909* | .685* | - | |
| Program Type [#] | -.870* | -.858* | -.734* | - |
| * significant at the .01 level | | | | |
| [#] dummy coded: 0 = distance program; 1 = on-campus program | | | | |

As Table 2 indicates, there was a significant strong negative correlation between program type and each dependent variable in the study, which indicates distance program students tended to get higher scores than the on-campus program students for each dependent variable. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses reported in the forthcoming paragraphs will explain this relationship better as they will draw more detailed pictures in terms of seeing the unique effect of the program type above and beyond the other independent variables of the study.

Table 3 presents the results of the first Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis with overall score from the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire as the dependent variable, and gender, age, GPA, teaching experience, and program type as the independent variables.

Table3. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis (Dependent Variable: Overall Score from the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire)

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Standard Error | F Model | R Square Change | F Change |
|------------------------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
| 1. Gender | .014 | .000 | -.004 | 14.873 | .045 | .000 | .045 |
| 2. Age | .438 | .192 | .184 | 13.405 | 25.702* | .191 | 51.349* |
| 3. GPA | .450 | .203 | .192 | 13.342 | 18.315* | .011 | 3.053 |
| 4. Teaching Experience | .467 | .218 | .204 | 13.241 | 15.028* | .016 | 4.322 |
| 5. Program Type | .875 | .765 | .760 | 7.276 | 139.422* | .547 | 498.033* |

* F is significant at the .01 level

As Table 3 indicates, the R Square of this regression model was found as .765, significant at the .01 level, $F(5, 214) = 139.422$. This result means that all five independent variables significantly explain 76.5 percent of the variation in overall scores from the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire.

R Square change value for the Program Type variable was found as .547, significant at the .01 level, $F(1, 214) = 498.033$, which indicates that controlling for the other four variables, Program Type significantly explains 54.7 percent of the variation in overall scores from the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire. In other words, above and beyond the effects of gender, age, GPA, and teaching experience, Program Type was found to be significantly explaining more than half of the variation in overall scores of the participants. The correlation coefficient between program type and overall score was found as $-.87$ (significant at the .01 level), which indicates that the distance program students had significantly higher overall scores than the on-campus program students.

After seeing the effect of program type on overall scores, now we can turn our attention to individual sections of the questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire focused on learner responsibilities and asked questions to the participants about how much responsibility language learners have in different aspects of the language learning process. Table 4 reports the results of the Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis with scores from the first section of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire as the dependent variable, and gender, age, GPA, teaching experience, and program type as the independent variables.

Table 4 shows that the R Square of this regression model was found as .740, significant at the .01 level, $F(5, 214) = 121.717$, indicating that all the independent variables of the study significantly explain 74 percent of the variation in the scores from the first section of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire.

R Square change value for the Program Type variable was found as .526, significant at the .01 level, $F(1, 214) = 432.993$, which indicates that controlling for the other four variables, Program Type significantly explains 52.6 percent of the variation in the scores from the first section. That is, above and beyond the effects of gender, age, GPA, and teaching experience, Program Type was found to be significantly explaining more than half of the variation in these scores. The correlation coefficient between program type and overall score was found as $-.85$ (significant at the .01 level; Table 2), which indicates that the distance program students had significantly higher scores in the first section of the questionnaire than the on-campus program students.

Table4. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis (Dependent Variable: Score from Section 1 of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire)

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Standard Error | F Model | R Square Change | F Change |
|------------------------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
| 1. Gender | .022 | .001 | -.004 | 8.501 | .109 | .001 | .109 |
| 2. Age | .423 | .179 | .171 | 7.724 | 23.585* | .178 | 47.036* |
| 3. GPA | .433 | .187 | .176 | 7.700 | 16.613* | .009 | 2.371 |
| 4. Teaching Experience | .462 | .213 | .199 | 7.593 | 14.587* | .026 | 7.103 |
| 5. Program Type | .860 | .740 | .734 | 4.377 | 121.717* | .526 | 432.993* |

* F is significant at the .01 level

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The second section of the questionnaire focused on learner abilities and asked questions to the participants about how they evaluate language learners' abilities to act autonomously in different situations. Table 5 presents the results of the Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis with scores from the second section of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire as the dependent variable, and gender, age, GPA, teaching experience, and program type as the independent variables.

Table5. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis (Dependent Variable: Score from Section 2 of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire)

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Standard Error | F Model | R Square Change | F Change |
|------------------------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------|---------|-----------------|----------|
| 1. Gender | .053 | .003 | -.002 | 7.686 | .604 | .003 | .604 |
| 2. Age | .383 | .146 | .139 | 7.127 | 18.623* | .144 | 36.545* |
| 3. GPA | .396 | .157 | .145 | 7.101 | 13.375* | .010 | 2.602 |
| 4. Teaching Experience | .401 | .161 | .145 | 7.100 | 10.297* | .004 | 1.055 |
| 5. Program Type | .745 | .554 | .544 | 5.186 | 53.227* | .394 | 188.941* |

* F is significant at the .01 level

Table 5 reports that the R Square of this regression model was found as .554, significant at the .01 level, $F(5, 214) = 53.227$, indicating that all the independent variables of the study significantly explain 55.4 percent of the variation in the scores from the second section of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire.

R Square change value for the Program Type variable was found as .394, significant at the .01 level, $F(1, 214) = 188.941$, which indicates that controlling for the other four independent variables, Program Type significantly explains 39.4 percent of the variation in the scores from the second section. In other words, controlling the effects of gender, age, GPA, and teaching experience, Program Type was found to be significantly explaining 39.4 percent of the variation in these scores. The correlation coefficient between program type and overall score was found as $-.73$ (significant at the .01 level; Table 2), indicating that the distance program students had significantly higher scores in the second section of the questionnaire than the on-campus program students.

The regressions models reported so far in this paper show the significant effect of program type on participants' views of student responsibilities and student abilities in the language learning process. Comparing the mean scores of the two groups on the instrument of the study can help us better interpret the effect of the program type on views of autonomy. Table 6 provides mean scores and standard deviations of the groups, and the results of the independent-samples t-tests used to compute the significance of the mean score differences. According to the table, both for the overall score and for the scores of first and second sections, students of the distance program had significantly higher means than the on-campus students.

Table6. Mean Score Differences

| | On-campus Program | | Distance Program | | df | t |
|-----------------|-------------------|------|------------------|------|-----|--------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | |
| Overall Score | 64.20 | 7.45 | 89.97 | 7.19 | 218 | 26.09* |
| Section 1 Score | 33.98 | 4.67 | 48.51 | 4.02 | 218 | 24.68* |
| Section 2 Score | 30.22 | 5.81 | 41.46 | 4.57 | 218 | 15.95* |

* t is significant at the .01 level

The three Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses and independent-samples t-tests reported so far in this paper show that the students of the distance B.A. in ELT program had higher scores from the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire than the students of the on-campus program, even when some other factors such as gender, age, GPA, and teaching experience are taken into consideration and controlled statistically. These results mean that when compared to the students of the on-campus program, students of the distance program attribute more responsibility to English language learners in different aspects of the language learning process such as making sure students make progress during lessons or outside class, stimulating their interest in English, identifying their weakness in English, deciding on the objectives and materials of a course, evaluating their learning and the course, or deciding what they learn outside class. In addition,

these results also mean that when compared to the students of the on-campus program, students of the distance program have more positive perceptions related to language learners' abilities to act autonomously in different situations such as choosing learning activities and materials in or outside class, choosing learning objectives, evaluating their own learning or the course, or regulating their own learning in or outside class.

The results of this study support the views of some researchers and the results of some other studies which focused on the relationship between autonomy and distance learning (Hurd, Beaven & Ortega, 2000; Passerini & Granger, 2000; Branden & Lambert, 1999; White, 1995). In one of the important studies on distance language learning, White (1995) compared strategy use between distance and classroom language learners. Results of the study indicated that participants' mode of study was the dominant influence on metacognitive strategy use. In particular, the study indicated that distance language learners employed self-management strategies much more than classroom language learners. In another study Hurd, Beaven and Ortega (2001) investigated the notion of autonomy in relation to distance language learning, and examined the skills and strategies needed by distance language learning students in order to achieve successful outcomes. The results of their study indicated rewarding points for distance learning course writers in terms of promoting learner autonomy.

This study compared two groups of teacher candidates, and the participants in one of the groups were considered to be likely to experience more autonomy in their own teacher education process. Analyses of the data indicated that the participants who were considered to experience more autonomy had more positive views related to the concept of learner autonomy which was measured in terms of student responsibilities and abilities in the language learning process. These results corroborate Little (1995) who argues that learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are interdependent and the promotion of one depends on the promotion of the other. In other words, the findings of this study support Little (1995) who suggests that future teachers should be given a first-hand experience of learner autonomy in their training because language teachers are more likely to succeed in promoting learner autonomy if they have been encouraged to be autonomous during their own teacher education process.

4. CONCLUSION

Learner autonomy is an important and desirable concept in the language teaching contexts. Teachers play an important role in promoting learner autonomy and teacher education programs should provide language teacher candidates with enough information and experience of autonomous learning (Benson, 2001; Little, 1995). The purpose of the current study was to investigate whether language teacher candidates who were likely to experience more autonomy in their teacher education process have more positive views of learner autonomy as compared to teacher candidates who potentially followed a less autonomous teacher education process.

The study compared two groups of English language teacher candidates in terms of their perceptions related to learner autonomy. One of the groups followed an on-campus B.A. in ELT program whereas the other group followed the distance version of the same program. Results of the study indicated that when compared to the students of the on-campus program, students of the distance program attributed more responsibility to English language learners in different aspects of the language learning process, and they also had more positive perceptions related to language learners' abilities to act autonomously.

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that language teacher education programs should provide teacher candidates with more practical and first-hand exposure of learner autonomy in order to help them become better promoters of this concept in their future language teaching careers. Making learner autonomy a practical part of the teacher education curriculum is of vital importance because autonomous learners seem to be more likely to make autonomous teachers.

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