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THE EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN AN INDONESIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract
Creating long-life learners has become a long-term educational goal in many educational settings including Indonesia. An initial step towards this goal is to develop autonomy in students. Currently, learner autonomy or independence in learning has been promoted in higher education through the concept of *Merdeka Belajar* (freedom of learning) by the Minister of Education and Culture. In high schools, the 2013 curriculum has also emphasized learner autonomy development. Thus it is necessary to look back at how teachers perceived the concept of learner autonomy long before the concept of *Merdeka Belajar* was introduced. This article reports a quantitative study that investigated English teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy and its development in Indonesia. This study was conducted in 2014 using a questionnaire and involved 145 high school English teachers in Magelang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. The findings revealed that these Indonesian teachers held positive perceptions of learner autonomy and strongly supported psychological elements of learner autonomy. These EFL teachers also showed strong support for social aspects of autonomy. These junior high school teachers perceived social interaction and cooperation as important for promoting learner autonomy in the Indonesian context.

Keywords: ELT, learner autonomy, perceptions

Introduction
Policies for developing autonomous learners with "the capacity to take charge of [their] own learning" (Holec, 1979, p. 3) have become a focus of interest for research and practice in language teaching and learning internationally (Benson, 2009). Creating independent citizens is also a goal of the national education system in the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Currently, this particular goal is being promoted by the programs of *Merdeka Belajar* (freedom of learning) introduced in higher education in 2020 in which university students are given the right to study any subjects they want to learn from various study programs available in their universities or other universities under the program of MBKM.

Interestingly, in high schools, the same educational goal for promoting learner autonomy has been found in the 2013 curriculum which describes clearly that:

Learning processes should be conducted in an interactive, inspiring, creative, pleasant way [which also] challenge, motivate the learners to actively participate and give adequate spaces for [students'] initiation, creativity, and autonomy based on learners' talents, interests and physical as well as psychological development (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013).

Learner autonomy has emerged as a new feature in this curriculum, although the directive to teachers to create independent citizens has been a goal for national education since 2003. The 2013 curriculum indicates a new direction within the teaching and learning processes in high schools in Indonesia. Teachers are required to follow some new principles in organizing the teaching and learning activities. These principles are described in regulation No. 65/ 2013 (Appendix one).

Principle nine of this new curriculum highlights learning which emphasizes the cultivation and creation of lifelong learners and shows the emphasis on promoting learning as a life-long endeavor. Principle one illustrates a shift away from students as knowledge receivers to students as the ones who discover the knowledge. Principle 10 recommends giving models, building the will to learn, and developing learners' creativity, and Principle 12 applies the principle that learning and teaching can occur outside the traditional classroom. Finally, principle 14 recognizes the value of individual differences and cultural backgrounds. These particular principles are intended to lead to the development of learner autonomy. For these principles to be implemented in English classrooms in Indonesia, English teachers need to emphasize learner autonomy.

The long-term goal in Indonesia of developing learner autonomy is to develop lifelong learners, but there are other beneficial effects of developing learner autonomy in language classrooms. The language learning of autonomous learners is believed to be more effective (Benson, 2011) because learners with a high level of autonomy can conduct the learning more efficiently and outside the classroom, they manage to apply the knowledge and skills obtained in the classroom for their independent learning outside the classroom (Little, 2009).

The study of autonomy is a work in progress since increasing numbers of practitioners contribute to research on learner autonomy every year (Benson, 2011, p. 18). Nonetheless, work on teachers' perceptions or beliefs about encouraging learner autonomy, as reported in this paper, is a recent development. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a) looked at English teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy at the language center of Sultan Qaboos University in Oman and found that teachers were very positive about learner autonomy, believing that learner autonomy would enhance students' language learning. Similarly, Lai, Gardner, and Law (2013) found that teachers at The University of Hong Kong were very positive about self-directed learning which reflected their belief in learner autonomy. Using a similar instrument to that designed by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a), in Thailand, Wichayathian and Reinders (2015) reported that tertiary teachers in their study agreed that learner autonomy positively affects language learning and contributed to language learners' success.

While Illés (2012) claims that assisting language learners to develop self-reliance and autonomy should be the task of language education, it may not be easy to realize in practice. Culture is blamed for the limited success in developing learner autonomy in Asia where teachers' efforts in developing learner autonomy may even be regarded by students as teachers neglecting the responsibilities of a 'good' teacher (2012).

Teachers may not be fully prepared to promote learner autonomy. English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Japanese high schools felt unready to foster learner autonomy even though they perceived its importance (Nakata, 2011). This reluctance to introduce learner autonomy may have arisen, as Trebbi (2008) suggests, from teachers' concerns about loss of control and inefficient learning which may affect students' achievement in examinations. Benson (2000) argues that language teachers face policy constraints, institutional constraints, and ideological constraints about learning which reduce their capacity to give freedom to learners.

To sum up, developing learner autonomy is a complex business. It not only relates to culture but also to teachers' readiness, teachers' concerns, and contextual factors that influence teachers' beliefs.

The complexity of developing learner autonomy has not reduced the growing interest in promoting learner autonomy. On the contrary, learner autonomy is attracting increasing attention in Asia (Nakata, 2011) where the educational traditions and culture differ from those in the West. In Southeast Asia, the concept of learner autonomy has been introduced in Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. In Vietnam, learner autonomy has been set as an important educational objective, particularly in international universities where it was found that providing socially mediated support helped Vietnamese learners to take control of their learning (Humphreys & Wyatt, 2013). In Thailand, autonomy is also seen as an important feature of distance English learning (Vanijdee, 2003). In Malaysia, efforts to develop learner autonomy have also been made through learning contracts which were found to increase student involvement in making learning choices (Ismail & Yusof, 2012). In Indonesia, the introduction of learner autonomy in both tertiary and secondary schools has led to little research. One recent study was conducted in tertiary education by Myartawan, Latief, and Suharmanto (2013). However, how learner autonomy is perceived in the Indonesian secondary school context remains unclear.

In Indonesia, the 2013 high school curriculum which supports autonomy development requires teachers to teach using a scientific approach. With this approach, teachers are required to facilitate their students' active learning through the learning stages of observing, questioning, associating, creating, and finally communicating. This approach to teaching which has learner autonomy as an essential component, and the expectation that teachers will develop learner autonomy regardless of their teaching context may challenge English teachers. As little research has been done about autonomy in Indonesian high schools and very little is known about the promotion of learner autonomy in Indonesia, the writers were interested to study how EFL teachers in Indonesia perceived learner autonomy and its development.

In addition, as the concept of *Merdeka Belajar* has been very popular these days, it is necessary to look back at teachers' perceptions about learner autonomy

far before the freedom of learning received much attention. Thus the writers would like to bring back the past study on teachers' actual perceptions about learner autonomy and its development in an EFL context. This study adds to the literature on teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy, a research area that has not received much attention in the Indonesian context in particular and in other EFL contexts in general.

Literature Review

Looking back to the theory of learner autonomy, there are various definitions available in the literature. Holec's definition of learner autonomy presented early in this paper is one of the most frequently cited in the literature (Benson, 2001). Even so, different scholars emphasize different aspects of autonomy. Benson redefined autonomy as "the capacity to take control of one's learning" (p.47). In applied linguistics learner autonomy is regarded as the "capacity for active, independent learning" (Dickinson, 1995, p. 167). Little (Little, 1991, p. 4) defines learner autonomy in terms of the capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent actions. Many different terms for autonomous learning appear to refer to the same thing (Broad, 2006). In practice, the term 'autonomous learning is regarded as synonymous with independent learning (Murase, 2015) and self-directed learning (Ciekanski, 2007). The term 'autonomous learners' also suggests strategic and self-regulated learners (Weinstein, Acee, Jung, & Dearman, 2011). From these definitions, it is clear that autonomy involves learners' capacity to take control and responsibility for their learning and use this skill to undertake further independent action.

Promoting learner autonomy in language learning is important for several reasons. The main reason is that learner autonomy promotes life-long learning (Egel, 2009). Little (1995) argues that those having autonomy in learning tend to achieve their learning targets and tend to maintain a positive attitude towards their learning in the future. Autonomous learners are motivated and reflective learners and their learning are efficient and effective (Little, 2009). Crabbe (1993) gives three arguments for why autonomy is desirable: ideological, psychological, and economic. The *ideological argument* refers to people's right to exercise choice and learn something based on their own choices. The *psychological argument* suggests that people can learn better especially when they are responsible for their learning activities and their activities of learning are also more meaningful, permanent as well as focused; while the *economic argument* contends that society has insufficient resources for fulfilling everyone's personal needs in every area of learning and therefore people must fulfill these needs themselves.

Autonomy has the potential to alleviate language classroom constraints such as insufficient numbers of textbooks (Kuchah & Smith, 2011). In Kuchah and Smith's case, students demonstrated autonomy by using texts they sourced themselves for group learning.

Also, there has been some discussion about aspects of autonomy. Benson (1997) proposes three: technical, psychological, and political. He argues that a *technical understanding* of learner autonomy means "the act of learning a language outside the framework of an educational institution and without the intervention of a teacher" (p.19). Within the *psychological version*, learner autonomy refers to "a capacity – a construct of attitudes and abilities – which allows learners to take more

responsibility for their learning" (p.19); and the political aspect, learner autonomy relates to "control over the process and content of learning" (p.19). Oxford (2003) adds *sociocultural perspectives* of learner autonomy which emphasize "social and interaction as a major part of cognitive and language development" (p. 85). Each version has a different emphasis depending on our perceptions of the concept of autonomy.

Smith (2003) identifies two further versions held by teachers. The weak version considers autonomy to be "a capacity which students currently lack (and so need 'training towards'), and /or identify it with a mode of learning (for example, self-access) which students need to be prepared for" (p. 130). The strong version holds that "students are, to greater or lesser degrees, already autonomous, and already capable of exercising this capacity" (p. 131). These understandings of autonomy may lead to different teaching practices. Teachers feel the need to develop students' strategies for working autonomously if they perceive their students to have weak autonomy, while if teachers feel that their students have strong autonomy, they may give tasks that require learners to continue to learn autonomously.

There may be different strategies for promoting learner autonomy in different contexts (Fisher, Hafner, & Young, 2007). Dam (2000) for example, suggests the need for teachers to provide an atmosphere of learning and also an environment that makes it possible for the students to get involved in their learning. The teacher should encourage students to reflect on their learning, on understanding the learning process and the function of language, and on using learning forms that enable them to take control of their progress (Dam, 2003).

Teachers can also promote learner-centeredness by sharing responsibilities for initiating learning activities explicitly, or implicitly providing activities that foster autonomy (Nakata, 2007). In addition, teachers can increase students' confidence by allowing students greater control (Chun Lai, Zhu, & Gong, 2015). This requires teachers to provide students with guidance on how to learn (Broad, 2006; Reinders & White, 2011). Such research illustrates the idea that learner autonomy is the result of an 'interactive process where the teacher increases students' autonomy through giving more control over both the learning content and process (Little, 2007: 26).

Literature also shows how collaboration among students may contribute to the development of autonomy in language classrooms. Little (2008) argues that the human capacity for performing autonomous behavior grows through interacting with other people. In the language classroom, autonomy development is enhanced through social interactions with teachers or friends (Murase, 2015).

Independent learning needs not to be learned in isolation and some autonomous students prefer collaborative learning (Fisher et al., 2007). Studies undertaken in the Asian context endorse the value of interdependence and group work for promoting learner autonomy (Smith, 2001). Whether this applies in Indonesian contexts or not is still unknown and so this study aimed to fill this gap in the literature.

Teachers seem uncertain of the value of independent learning (Fisher et al., 2007). Their perceptions of autonomy may be confined to "institutional and classroom learning arrangements within established curricula" (Benson, 2008: 15), and exist only within the classroom. Feryok's (2013) findings appear to support this

teacher perception that belongs in the classroom. She found that autonomy was understood by the teacher as occurring when students showed accountability for their learning and shared control of classroom activities. This study also illustrated the ability of autonomous learners to create meaningful activities to support the acquisition of grammatical forms and to construct opportunities to use target items. This suggests, therefore, that teachers' tasks should allow learning opportunities for students and should facilitate students' use of those opportunities (Cotterall & Crabbe, 2008).

Method

This paper reports quantitative results from a mixed methods design in which a survey and case study were used to capture teachers' perceptions and practices of developing learner autonomy in Indonesian high schools. The survey formed the first stage of the mixed methods study and provided baseline data showing teachers' conceptions of autonomy during the early stages of implementing the 2013 curriculum. This survey was followed by a multiple case study to further investigate teachers' perceptions and classroom practices. This article however specifically reports the results from the statistical analysis of the survey.

To investigate teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy and its development this study asked the following research questions:

a. How do EFL teachers in Indonesian high schools perceive the concept of learner autonomy?
b. How do these teachers believe that learner autonomy can be promoted?

The survey was conducted in Magelang Regency, Central Java Indonesia from July to September 2014. Within this regency, there is a world heritage site named Borobudur Temple, known as the biggest Buddhist temple in the world, where both domestic and international visitors come every day and where English is used to support tourist activities. These authentic learning resources (the tourists and advertising literature) are accessible to students and may support students' autonomous language learning outside the classroom.

Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size formula, for a population size of around 200 English teachers, the recommended sample was 132. This sample was obtained using convenience sampling, so the only selection criterion was the participants' willingness to participate voluntarily in this study (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). There was equal opportunity for every English teacher in the regency to participate as we distributed information sheets and consent forms to every school in Magelang.

There are 21 districts in this regency and 100 schools were targeted for this study. However, the survey distribution coincided with the accreditation period and the curriculum implementation process which meant that 21 schools declined to participate. Thus, the final 145 participants in this study came from 79 schools. Those participants were all Indonesian and they came from diverse schools: state; Ma'arif (Islamic); Muhammadiyah (Islamic); Catholic; Christian; and other private schools.

Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012a) questionnaire was used for the first section of this survey and distributed to the research participants in their schools. It aimed to categorize teachers' general perceptions of learner autonomy. This would enable

comparisons with previous studies that used the same questionnaire (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a; Wichayathian & Reinders, 2015). Permission to use this questionnaire was obtained through personal correspondence with Borg in 2014.

The questionnaire consisted of 37 items with five responses scaled from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Muijs, 2004). The questionnaire was presented in English and Indonesian and the respondents could choose the version they preferred. The questionnaire took 20 – 30 minutes to complete and the teachers were given a week on average to complete it. To protect the identity of the participants, teachers were not obliged to provide their details unless they wished to participate in the next stage of the study.

Once the survey was done, SPSS 22 was used to perform a descriptive and inferential analysis. Through descriptive analysis, the frequency distribution was presented. This showed not only the number of respondents selecting each option given on the rating scale, but also the percentage of the sample representing this number (Thompson, 2009). In the inferential analysis two non-parametric tests were used, the Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests, to compare scores of the groups of teachers according to the independent variables ranging from age to school distances. The last analysis was factor analysis which allowed me to discover "where different variables address the same underlying concepts" (Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012: 560). This showed which items in the survey went together with one another statistically. The findings in this article are confined to descriptive statistics analysis.

Findings

The findings of the study are presented based on the percentage of teachers selecting each option on the Likert Scale as the survey instrument. The teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. The teachers' responses to the questionnaire adopted from Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a)

No.	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	"Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy"	.0%	2.8%	11.8%	60.4%	25.0%
2.	"Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy"	0.7%	2.1%	11.0%	54.5%	31.7%
3.	"Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone"	.0%	0.7%	4.8%	53.8%	40.7%
4.	"Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn"	.0%	2.8%	11.8%	61.1%	24.3%
5.	"Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners"	.0%	12.4%	32.4%	48.3%	6.9%

6.	"Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classrooms"	.0%	4.1%	33.8%	48.3%	13.8%
7.	"Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy"	.0%	2.1%	9.7%	55.9%	32.4%
8.	"Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher"	9.0%	43.4%	20.0%	19.3%	8.3%
9.	"It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners"	9.7%	36.6%	23.4%	25.5%	4.8%
10.	"It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and adults"	1.4%	0.7%	2.8%	60.7%	34.5%
11.	"Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence"	.0%	1.4%	2.1%	51.4%	45.1%
12.	"Learner autonomy allows language learner to learn more effectively than they otherwise would"	.0%	.0%	7.6%	57.9%	34.5%
13.	"Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds"	0.7%	10.3%	20.0%	47.6%	21.4%
14.	"Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do"	.0%	3.5%	15.3%	60.4%	20.8%
15.	"Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centred classrooms"	2.8%	12.4%	20.0%	48.3%	16.6%
16.	"Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other"	0.7%	0.7%	3.4%	69.7%	25.5%
17.	"Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching"	0.7%	35.9%	22.8%	31.0%	9.7%
18.	"Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher"	0.7%	17.2%	21.4%	49.0%	11.7%
19.	"Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together"	0.7%	3.5%	6.9%	65.3%	23.6%
20.	"Learner autonomy is only possible with adult learners"	20%	45.5%	22.1%	10.3%	2.1%
21.	"Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access centre"	2.1%	16.1%	34.3%	42.0%	5.6%
22.	"Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed"	.0%	19.4%	20.1%	52.1%	8.3%

23.	"Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners"	19.3%	52.4%	17.9%	6.9 %	3.4 %
24.	"Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teachers"	2.8%	50.3%	27.6%	16.6 %	2.8%
25.	"Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy"	0.7%	2.8%	2.1%	58.6%	35.9%
26.	"Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners"	2.1%	31.3%	36.8%	25.0%	4.9 %
27.	"Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials"	0.7%	11.0%	23.4%	52.4%	12.4%
28.	"Learner-centred classrooms provide ideals conditions for developing learner autonomy"	.0%	3.4%	6.9%	54.5%	35.2%
29.	"Learning how to learn is the key to developing learner autonomy"	.0%	4.1%	3.4%	66.9%	25.5%
30.	"Learning how to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy"	0.7%	2.1%	2.8%	64.1%	30.3%
31.	"Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy"	.0%	2.1%	8.3%	56.6%	33.1%
32.	"The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy"	.0%	0.7%	7.6%	63.4%	28.3%
33.	"Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated"	.0%	1.4%	4.1%	51.0%	43.4%
34.	"The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy"	6.5%	46.8%	19.4%	20.9%	6.5%
35.	"The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy"	0.7%	2.8%	5.5%	56.6%	34.5%
36.	"Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner"	.0%	0.7%	1.4%	55.9%	42.1%
37.	"To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning"	.0%	.0%	3.4%	67.6%	29.0%

The Indonesian teachers as the respondents in this study expressed positive perceptions toward learner autonomy as most teachers opted for "agree" and "strongly agree" in most survey items. Teachers showed the strongest support for item 36 where 98% expressed their agreement or strongly agreed that learner autonomy has a positive effect on the student's success as language learners. This result was in agreement with those from Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012a) and

Wichayathian and Reinders' (2015) studies, showing teachers in Indonesia also have positive perceptions of learner autonomy and its effect on language learning.

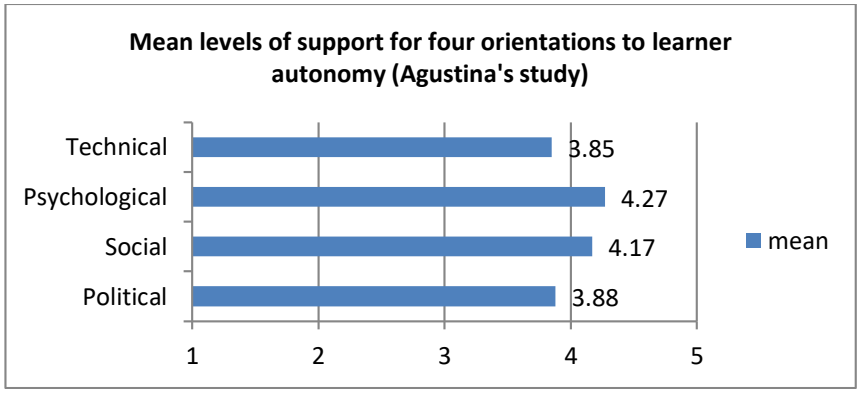
Nearly two third of the respondents (71.7%) disagreed that learner autonomy is a concept that is not suited to non-Western learners. As the respondents in this study were all non-Western teachers, this result signaled that they perceived that their non-Western learners could benefit from developing autonomy.

These two survey items indicate that these Indonesian teachers perceived learner autonomy as a concept important for language learning achievement and the majority of them felt that it suited non-Western learners such as Indonesian students.

Furthermore, the survey items had ten constructs, and to investigate how teachers perceived the promotion of learner autonomy, this article presents the results of the constructs relating to the *technical, psychological, social*, and *political* dimensions of learner autonomy (Benson, 1997).

Technical perspectives often deal with learning activities conducted outside the class. By indicating agreement with this dimension, teachers signaled their understanding of the importance of independent learning outside lesson time for promoting learner autonomy. *Psychological* perspectives here cover the mental capacity which allows autonomy to develop. By giving support to this dimension, teachers illustrated their belief that students need mental attributes such as confidence and motivation before their autonomy can be developed. This may also mean that teachers perceive a need to develop these attributes in their students before they can achieve autonomy. *Social* perspectives involve the role of cooperation and social interaction in fostering learner autonomy. The *political* dimension relates to the act of giving students choices or involving learners in classroom decision-making. By giving support to this dimension teachers indicated that the promotion of autonomy should be done by allowing students to determine some aspects of their learning.

The mean for each dimension was calculated and then the comparison of the means was presented to show the order from the highest mean to the lowest mean. In this study, the means obtained were 3.85 for the technical dimension, 4.27 for the psychological dimension, 4.17 for the social dimension, and 3.88 for the political dimension. This result suggests the teachers prioritized these four dimensions from psychological, social, and political, to technical (which had the least support). Figure 1 presents a comparison between this and the original study:



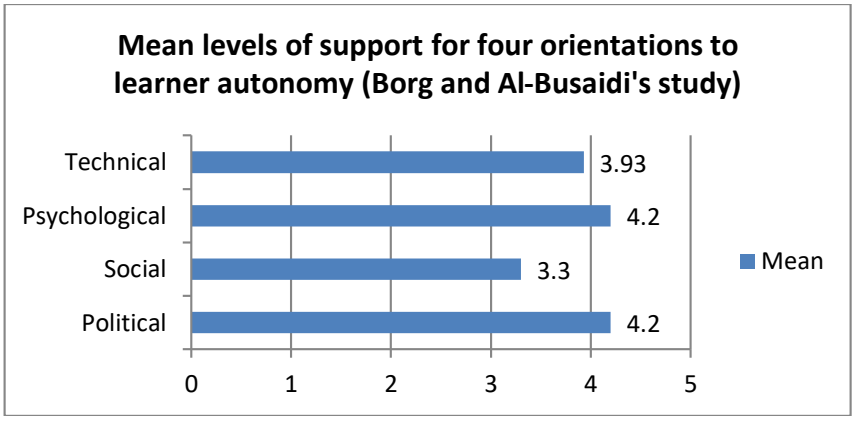


Figure 1. Mean comparison of the four constructs in this current study and Borg and Al-Busaidi's studies

The mean comparison above illustrates a significant difference. In the original studies, teachers' strongest support was for the psychological dimension, the political dimension, the technical dimension, and then the social dimension. Both the teachers in Borg and Al-Busaidi's study and the Indonesian teachers had the highest mean for the psychological perspective of learner autonomy. Teachers in both studies agreed that learners needed certain mental attributes to develop learner autonomy.

In marked contrast to Borg and Al-Busaidi's study where the social dimension of autonomy had the lowest mean (3.3), in the Indonesian context, the mean was significantly higher (4.17). These different findings signal contrasting underlying beliefs about the promotion of autonomy held by teachers in Indonesia.

Discussion

Although teachers in this study indicated positive perceptions about the role of learner autonomy in general, in terms of its promotion their responses suggested stronger support for both psychological and social perspectives than for technical and political perspectives. This means that teachers perceived students' mental attributes as important for the development of learner autonomy. In addition, Indonesian teachers regarded cooperative work or group work as an important strategy for promoting learner autonomy. This contradicts the findings of the original study where the participants indicated the least support for social perspectives of learner autonomy. The finding from this study supports the claim made by Little (1991) and Kohonen (2010) that within the process of developing learner autonomy social interactions are required. The finding also supports the idea that learner autonomy should be understood as a 'social capacity' developing through 'interdependence' rather than 'independence' (Benson and Cooker, 2013: 8).

This study supports the growing idea that group-based approaches to developing autonomy may be more suitable for Asian contexts than individual learning. This contrasts with Borg and Al-Busaidi's participants who appeared to value individual work over group work, given the higher mean for the technical perspective (3.93) than the social perspective (3.3). The teachers in my study had the lowest belief in the technical and political perspectives of learner autonomy suggesting that Indonesian teachers regarded giving students choices about their

learning, and allowing them opportunities to learn outside the classroom were less necessary for developing learner autonomy. A possible explanation for these teachers did not prioritize the political dimensions of learner autonomy may relate to the ages (12 to 15 years) of their students who were much younger than the university students taught by the teachers in Borg and Al-Busaidi's study.

Conclusion

This study reveals that EFL teachers in Indonesian high schools held positive perceptions of learner autonomy and its positive effect on students' language learning. It is striking that a significant majority (98%) of the teachers believed that learner autonomy suits Eastern learners. These Indonesian teachers were familiar with teacher-centered approaches and yet valued the western concept of learner autonomy in language learning. The Indonesian culture and educational tradition did not seem to be a barrier to the development of learner autonomy suggesting that this regency of Indonesia is a favorable environment for implementing the new curriculum principles of learner autonomy. While these findings show that a particular group of Asian EFL teachers showed commitment to promoting learner autonomy, it is also important to note that these teachers gave the strongest support to the use of cooperation, collaboration, and group work rather than promoting individual work. This might link to their learners' age or to other factors which were not captured through this survey. This is a limitation of the study. Even so, this study presents the beliefs and understanding of a statistically significant number of 145 Indonesian teachers and thus contributes to an evolving understanding of secondary teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy. Further research may also need to be conducted to study university teachers' perceptions about learner autonomy as it is currently supported by *Merdeka Belajar* Programs so that the development of learner autonomy in higher education can be captured well in Indonesia particularly when the freedom of learning has become the icon in the Indonesian education system.

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Appendix one:

The principles of teaching and learning activities (Minister of Education and Culture of Republic Indonesia in Regulation No. 65/ 2013)

1. From students as the ones receiving the knowledge to students as the ones discovering knowledge;
2. From teachers as the only learning resource into multi-resources based learning where the teacher becomes one of the learning resources.
3. From textual approach into a process [approach]for strengthening the use of scientific approach
4. From content based learning into competence based learning
5. From partial learning into an integrated learning
6. From learning which emphasises a single answer to learning with multidimensionality correct answers
7. From verbalism learning into applicative skills
8. Increasing the balance of hard skills and soft skills
9. The learning with emphasises the cultivation and creation of life-long learners
10. The learning which applies the value of giving models, building the will and developing learners' creativity in the learning process
11. The learning which takes place at home, at school and in the society
12. The learning which applies the principle that everyone is teacher, everyone is learner and everywhere is class.
13. The use of information and communication technology to enhance the learning efficiency and effectiveness
14. The recognition of individual differences and learners' cultural background