



THE CONTRIBUTION OF AFFECTIVE SKILLS TO FOSTER LEARNER AUTONOMY IN EFL CLASSES

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10254251>

Abstract: This article studies concept of learner autonomy in language learning, emphasizing its role in empowering learners to take control of their educational process. The study underscores the significance of cognitive, metacognitive, and affective skills in developing and sustaining independent learning. Additionally, intertwined relationship between motivation, self-regulation, and independent learning are explored in it, emphasizing the positive correlation between motivational beliefs and effective self-regulation.

Key words: learner autonomy, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, motivation.

Learner autonomy stands as a cornerstone of effective language learning, empowering learners to take charge of their learning journey and navigate the intricacies of language acquisition with confidence and independence. By fostering learner autonomy, educators nurture learners' ability to set their own goals, choose appropriate learning strategies, and monitor their progress, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for their linguistic growth.

Different scholars give a variety of definitions to learner autonomy. For example, Holec (1981) and Little (1991) state that it is the ability and gaining a power to take responsibility for one's own learning. Also, Dickinson (1994) points out that it is the ability to determine the goals of one's learning, choose the appropriate learning strategies, and monitor one's own progress. Other definitions proposed by Dörnyei (2005) is the ability of the student to take ownership of their learning and make autonomous, well-informed decisions regarding every facet of their education and by Benson (2013) is the ability to control and manage one's own learning. These definitions highlight different aspects of learner autonomy, but they all emphasize the importance of the learner taking charge of their own learning.

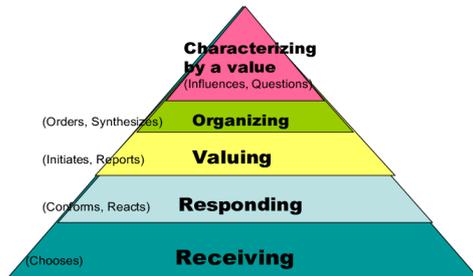
In order to maintain and develop independent learning skills cognitive skills, metacognitive skills and affective skills are required (B. Meyer, et al. 2008). Cognitive skills include components of mental functioning like an individual's capacity to memorize and recall information, focus and suppress attention, process information quickly, and reason spatially and causally (P. Robinson, 2012).

On the other hand, metacognitive skills in mostly refer to learners' individual abilities such as self-regulation skills, self-assessment, monitoring and planning, and their ability to evaluate their leaning process. Through their metacognitive skills learners assess many things in their lives so as to develop their learning abilities. They utilize these skills, for instance, to evaluate their learning progress, identify potential solutions to a given issue, choose the best approach, and then reevaluate their overall level of performance (Tachie, S. A., 2018).

Referring to the third skill which is considered to be pivotal in developing learner autonomy is affective skills. These are the abilities that have to do with emotions and

sentiments. The affective domain, described by Krathwohl et al. (1964) illustrates receiving - paying attention; responding - motivation and satisfaction; valuing - beliefs and attitudes; organization - developing a values system and characterization - internalization and acting on their values and beliefs (Table 1).

Table 1 Krathwohl's Taxonomy of Affective Learning



The findings of the research carried out by Ommundsen (2003) highlight the significance of integrating students' motivational and cognitive traits to offer a more comprehensive view of their learning self-regulation. This emphasizes that Self-regulation techniques alone won't help students learn; they also need to be motivated.

More specifically, it appears that motivational views and students' use of self-regulation techniques are consistently correlated. These motivating ideas involve students believing in the importance of effort, hard work, and their own potential for success. On the other hand, having a solid implicit theory of ability prevents students from using metacognitive techniques, which prevent them from learning on their own.

According to Bishop (2006) details studies in which language learners were taught particular tactics related to independent learning, like how to evaluate their own work. In a similar vein, Zimmerman (2002), if performance gains are demonstrated and close self-monitoring takes place, motivation can be significantly increased. After learning these abilities, students were able to organize and oversee their own work. Additionally, students showed increased attention, zeal, and motivation. This is significant because it creates a feedback loop that boosts learning. Consequently, motivation is a result of autonomous learning as well as a factor in greater independent learning.

Concerning the mediating role of initiative/disengagement, the results (Volet, S,1997) suggest that when students view a task positively, they are prone to invest more effort in their studies. Moreover, if they exhibit a proactive approach (i.e., high initiative/disengagement), their learning outcomes are likely to be positively influenced, especially in tasks that require the self-regulation of learning strategies, such as coursework. Conversely, when students hold negative perceptions of a task, their commitment to studying is minimal, and thus, their ability to initiate action and effectively establish and sustain their intentions may not impact their learning outcomes. In summary, achieving better performance seems to require both a favorable perception of the task and effective volitional control.

When applied to learning a second language (L2), the requirement for relatedness pertains to the degree to which language learners sense care and connection with others in their classroom. The need for competence relates to how language learners perceive their ability to excel in their coursework, often influenced by exposure to effective teaching methods and support. Lastly, the need for autonomy involves students' sense of having some

level of choice in participating in classroom activities aimed at improving their language skills. It also encompasses accepting and feeling committed even when the choice is not entirely within their control, providing a sense of volition and influence (Lou et al., 2018).

A crucial emotional skill essential for self-directed learning, connected to motivation, is the concept of 'delay of gratification' (Corno, 1992). This term signifies the capacity to defer obtaining something desired. Given that motivation involves persisting in the midst of challenges and students' readiness to retry a task after initial difficulties, it is proposed that 'delay of gratification' is a crucial skill for both motivation and independent learning.

Another aspect of affective skills is motivation which stands as a pivotal concept in psychology, delving into the fundamental reasons behind human behavior and cognition (Guilloteaux, M. J, at al., 2008). Its significance extends prominently to the realm of language education, where both teachers and students frequently employ the term to elucidate the factors influencing success or failure in learning. Motivation serves as the primary catalyst for initiating second or foreign language (L2) learning, evolving into a driving force sustaining the often protracted and challenging learning journey. Even individuals endowed with exceptional abilities find it challenging to achieve long-term goals in the absence of sufficient motivation. Notably, well-designed curricula and effective teaching, while crucial, are insufficient in ensuring student accomplishment—there must also be a foundational level of motivation.

In conclusion, learner autonomy is a cornerstone for effective language learning, empowering learners to take charge of their educational process. It is the learner's ability to set goals, choose strategies, and monitor progress. In maintaining independent learning skills, cognitive, metacognitive, and affective skills are essential. From affective skills motivation plays a crucial role in self-regulation, impacting learners' ability to evaluate their work and boost attention and zeal. Also, positive task perceptions and effective volitional control are key to achieving better performance. The affective domain, including relatedness, competence, and autonomy, contributes to emotional well-being and success in language learning. The concept of 'delay of gratification' emerges as a crucial emotional skill linked to motivation and independent learning. Overall, affective skills alongside with cognitive and metacognitive skills plays a crucial role in fostering learner autonomy.

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