The Correlation Between Level of Learner Autonomy and Learner's Achievements in Arabic Reading and Listening: A Quantitative, Non-experimental Correlational Study

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The shift from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction requires language teachers' roles to change from being lecturers and controllers to facilitators and advisors. This shift requires students to have a high degree of learner autonomy. However, some teachers hesitate to promote learner autonomy. If they remain uncertain about the significance of learner autonomy and its impact on student achievement, they will likely avoid promoting learner autonomy. This quantitative non-experimental correlational study investigated the relationship between students' level of learner autonomy and their achievement in Arabic listening and reading as measured by In-Course Proficiency Tests (ICPTs). The participants were 86 U.S. military service members learning Arabic and its dialects as a foreign language in the Arabic Basic Course at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center in Monterey, California. A learner autonomy Questionnaire (LAQ) was used to determine the students' level of learner autonomy. Bivariate Pearson correlation and linear regression tests determined the relationship and its predictive power between the LAQ and ICPT variables. The findings indicate that high scores on the LAQ were positively and directly associated with high scores on the listening and reading portions of the ICPT. The study concluded that promoting learner autonomy in learning Arabic and its dialects is essential due to its impact on students' scores on proficiency tests. Recommendations are included and aim to enhance teachers' and learners' awareness of the importance of learner autonomy and encourage teachers to promote learner autonomy in their instruction.

Keywords: *Learner autonomy, learner achievement, language for specific purposes*

INTRODUCTION

Learner autonomy (LA) refers to learners' ability to take charge of their learning, be aware of their learning goals and strategies, and monitor and evaluate their education progress (Little, Leni, & Legenhausen, 2017; Oxford, 2015). The concept of LA in adults learning a foreign language has been at the center of academic discussions for many years, and teachers are encouraged to promote LA. Some teachers hesitate to promote LA, which could be due to either a lack of information about its importance or a lack of awareness about the positive influence of LA on students' performance on tests (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017; Buenner, 2019; Szocs & Jozsef, 2017). Awareness on the part of language teachers and learners about the importance of learner autonomy, motivation, and providing a learning environment where students and teachers can practice autonomous learning skills were essential in promoting learner autonomy.

This research investigated the topic of learner autonomy through the lens of Malcolm Knowles's andragogy theory. Malcolm Knowles, known as "the father of andragogy" in the United States, claimed that adults and children learn differently and introduced six assumptions associated with adult learning (Knowles et al., 2014). The Knowles andragogical model encourages educators to understand the difference between children's and adults' learning and incorporate adult learning's core principles in their teaching (Ferreira & MacLean, 2017). The core assumptions of adult learning theory are the learner's *need to know*, *self-concept*, *prior experience*, *readiness to learn*, *orientation to learning*, and *motivation to learn* (Knowles et al., 2014). Studying the characteristics of learner autonomy and its relationship to learning a foreign language through the lens of adult learner theory can inform the importance of utilizing learning strategies and explaining the teachers' and students' roles and responsibilities in teaching and learning a foreign language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of learner autonomy in adults learning a foreign language has been at the center of many academic discussions for many years (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017; Oxford, 2015; Salimi & Ansari, 2015). The importance of promoting learner autonomy and finding how language teachers and learners can contribute to developing learner autonomy have become a prominent research agenda (Alonazi, 2017; Gholami, 2016; Hsieh & Hsieh, 2019; Oxford, 2015; Salimi & Ansari, 2015). Unlike traditional teaching methods in which the teacher is at the center of instruction, the current trend in education places more emphasis on putting students at the center of instruction and increasing their responsibilities in the process of learning (Hsieh & Hsieh, 2019; Rana, 2019). Engaging students in decisions, such as choosing learning materials, learning strategies, and the strategies to demonstrate their understanding, such as writing essays, explaining orally, or creating video clips, is an essential element of promoting learner autonomy (Cotterall, 2017; Mynard, 2017; Rana, 2019). Little et al. (2017) explained teachers' and students' roles in developing learner autonomy in learning a language and introduced three principles for promoting learner autonomy. These principles are engaging learners in the process of learning, providing learners with opportunities to reflect on their learning, and using the target language communicatively (cited in Mynard, 2017). Language teachers need to ensure that

students understand and acknowledge their critical role in learning activities such as planning for learning, setting learning goals and objectives, assessing the effectiveness of learning strategies, and evaluating the progress of language learning (Ceylon, 2015; Little et al., 2017; Oxford, 2015; Yasmin & Sohail, 2018). Many of these researchers' works have confirmed the effectiveness of promoting learner autonomy in teaching a foreign or second language. The discussion that follows includes the findings of various studies related to learner autonomy.

Various studies have explored the topic of learner autonomy. Ayash (2018) studied the correlation between the level of learner autonomy among Yemeni postgraduate students and their achievement on an English proficiency test. The study found no significant relationship between students' degree of learner autonomy and their scores on the university's standardized English language proficiency test. However, Ayash acknowledged that there were limitations in the study and encouraged teachers to foster learner autonomy in their classroom instruction. Szocs and Jozsef (2017) conducted a study in a Hungarian secondary school to explore teachers' and learners' perspectives on learner autonomy and classroom activities that promote autonomous learning skills. Unlike Ayash (2018), Szocs and Jozsef found a direct and positive relationship between learners' level of learner autonomy, learners' motivation, and their achievements in learning a foreign language. Interestingly, their study also revealed that teachers' and learners' perceptions about learner autonomy did not match. In addition, the notes from classroom observation indicated that the learning activities teachers wanted to do were not similar to what they did in their classrooms. Similarly, Dogan and Mirici (2017) conducted mixed research with EFL teachers in a Turkish university to explore their perceptions of learner autonomy and practices that could promote learner autonomy. The findings indicated that the EFL teachers in the Turkish university perceived learner autonomy in learning the English language as a positive factor. Almost all EFL teacher participants supported integrating activities that increase students' responsibility in learning and give them authority to control their education. However, as in Ayash (2018) and Szocs and Jozsef (2017), Turkish EFL teachers in the Dogan and Mirici study expressed their concerns about the feasibility of promoting learner autonomy in their classroom and involving students in some activities such as making decisions about learning materials and monitoring and assessing learning. Some of the language teachers in the above studies demonstrated insufficient awareness about developing learner autonomy and expressed their concerns about the feasibility of promoting learner autonomy (Ayash, 2018; Dogan & Mirici, 2017; Szocs & Jozsef, 2017). However, except Ayash (2018) who found no correlation between the level of learner autonomy and students' performance on the test, the majority of the above studies confirmed that teachers play a critical role in helping students to become autonomous learners by building a close relationship with students, give them sufficient freedom in learning, and incorporating their interests and experiences in the learning process (Ayash, 2018; Dogan & Mirici, 2017; Szocs & Jozsef, 2017).

In the same vein, Buenner (2019) studied university teachers' and students' perspectives on learner autonomy in Thailand and reported that EFL teachers expressed an insufficient understanding of learner autonomy's theoretical and practical aspects and considered learner autonomy as mere self-study or independent learning. Buenner also found that teacher respondents believed autonomous learning practices are not applicable inside the classroom. Instead, they thought students might want to practice autonomous learning skills outside of school independently and in their free time. Buenner's findings in the Thai context confirmed the

findings of Abdolrezapour and Fallah (2015) in the Iranian context and Khairallah et al. (2020) in the Lebanese context. Abdolrezapour and Fallah (2015) found that the way teachers practice teaching and how they view the learning process influenced their students' perspectives and views toward learning. In other words, when teachers reflect on their teaching and think about the practices they used in the classroom, their students are most likely follow the same thinking and behavior (Abdolrezapour & Fallah, 2015). Khairallah et al. (2020) studied the factors of Lebanese students' resistance to engaging in autonomous learning activities in learning English as a foreign language. In their study, the Lebanese English-language teachers expected their students to be more independent and responsible for their learning. In contrast, the students believed that the more they rely on their teachers and get guidance and support, the better achievement they would have on the language tests. As a result, Khairallah et al. suggested that Lebanese universities need to change the top-down decision-making approach and consider university learners as capable individuals who can set learning goals and identify and select appropriate resources and learning strategies without entirely relying on their teachers' instructions.

Borg and Alshumaimeri (2017) studied teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy in the Saudi Arabian context.They found that teachers showed dependence on structured official curriculums and believed that promoting learner autonomy might not help learners succeed on standardized achievement tests. The findings showed that the teachers, due to a dependence on the official curriculum, failed to demonstrate the promotion of learner autonomy in their teaching. However, the participating teachers accepted the value of learner autonomy in learning a foreign language and acknowledged the importance of integrating learner autonomy in their teaching. Both Borg and Alshumaimeri (2017) and Szocs and Jozsef (2017) acknowledged and confirmed the critical roles of language teachers in developing learner autonomy and highlighted the importance of raising teachers' education and level of awareness about the notion of learner autonomy. Many studies concluded that without a teacher who is knowledgeable, experienced, and most importantly willing to transfer his or her authority to students, it is challenging for language learners to increase their participation and improve their autonomy in learning (Abdolrezapour & Fallah, 2015; Ayash, 2018; Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017, Buenner, 2019; Smith et al., 2018; Szocs & Jozsef, 2017).

While most of the studies on promoting learner autonomy in learning a foreign language highlighted the importance of developing autonomous learning skills as well as the critical roles of language teachers and learning activities in promoting learner autonomy, uncertainty about the effectiveness of autonomous learning skills and lack of information to illustrate the impact of learner autonomy on a learner's results on language proficiency tests were evident in some studies. Uncertainty about the effectiveness of autonomous learning and insufficient evidence to support the positive impact of learner autonomy in learning a foreign language could prevent some language teachers and learners from promoting learner autonomy (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017; Ceylon, 2015; Gholami, 2016). Both teachers and students want to know more about the relationship between learner autonomy and students' achievement (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017; Rana, 2019). The current study addressed the association between the students' level of learner autonomy in learning Arabic and its dialects as a foreign language and their achievement in the Arabic language proficiency tests using the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the relationship, if any, between the DLIFLC students' level of learner autonomy in learning Arabic and its dialects as a foreign language and their scores on the Arabic In-Course Proficiency Tests?

RQ2. To what extent could the DLIFLC students' level of learner autonomy in learning Arabic and its dialects as a foreign language predict their achievements on the In-Course Proficiency Tests?

H1$_0$. The DLIFLC students' level of learner autonomy in learning Arabic and its dialects as a foreign language has no statistically significant influence on their scores on the In-Course Proficiency Tests.

H1$_a$. The DLIFLC students' level of learner autonomy in learning Arabic and its dialects as a foreign language has a statistically significant influence on their scores on the In-Course Proficiency Tests.

H2$_0$. The DLIFLC students' level of learner autonomy in learning Arabic and its dialects as a foreign language is not a potential predictor for their achievements on the In-Course Proficiency Tests.

H2$_a$. The DLIFLC students' level of learner autonomy in learning Arabic and its dialects as a foreign language is a potential predictor for their achievements on the In-Course Proficiency Tests.

The knowledge derived from this research revealed that students' level of learner autonomy in learning Arabic as a foreign language is positively related to their achievements on the Arabic language proficiency tests.

METHOD

The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental correlational design was to investigate the relationship between the participants' level of LA in learning Arabic and its dialects as a foreign language (as measured by the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire) and their achievement on the Arabic listening and reading (as measured in In-Course Proficiency Tests). A quantitative non-experimental correlational design was used to answer the research questions, test hypotheses, and achieve the study's purpose. A quantitative inquiry is considered to be a suitable methodology for this study because both the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire (LAQ) and In-Course Proficiency Tests (ICPT) variables generate numerical and continuous data. Additionally, a quantitative non-experimental correlational design was aligned with the purpose of the research because this study intended to investigate the relationship between the LAQ and ICPT variables as they exist naturally and without any intervention or manipulation (Apuke, 2017; Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). The correlational design was suitable because it reveals whether the scores generated by one continuous variable are statistically and significantly associated with the scores generated by another continuous variable.

Setting

The population for this non-experimental quantitative study was the students of the Arabic Basic Course in the Arabic schools within the DLIFLC located in the Presidio of Monterey, California. The data collection started after the local Scientific Review Board (SRB), Northcentral University (NCU) IRB, and HRPP approved the study. At the time of the study, around 500 students studied Arabic and its dialects in three separate Arabic schools. A minimum sample size of 84 participants is necessary to measure the correlation between two variables with a power of 80%, at medium strength, and with a value of alpha of 0.05, per guidelines for correlational analysis using power analysis and sample size (PASS), developed by Bujang and Baharum (2016). The participants were 86 U.S. military service members of different branches with a minimum of a high school graduate diploma. The participants' level of education, age, and military affiliation to a specific U.S. military branch, such as the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marines, were not variables in this study.

A multistage sampling method was utilized to draw the sample. The multistage sampling method was a mixture of clustering and simple random sampling methods. In a clustering sampling method, researchers usually divide the population into different clusters or groups (Alvi, 2016). The students in each classroom constituted a cluster or a group of learners, and then a simple random sampling method was used within each group. All participants were informed about the study's purpose and objective, and they were given the freedom to choose whether to participate or refuse participation.

Instruments

Learner Autonomy Questionnaire (LAQ)

The data were collected online via a self-reported learner autonomy questionnaire (LAQ), which determined each participant's level of learner autonomy in learning Arabic. The LAQ was developed by Zhang and Li (2004) and hosted in a Microsoft 365 Form. Zhang and Li developed the English version of the LAQ based on the learning strategies organized by Oxford (1990), Wenden (1998), and O'Malley and Chamot (1990). The LAQ has 21 items divided into two portions. The LAQ has 21 questions divided into two parts. The first part has eleven questions on a five-point Likert scale with options of *never, seldom, occasionally, often, and always.* Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were equal to never, seldom, occasionally, often, and always respectively. The numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were used to generate numerical and computable data. The second part of the LAQ has ten multiple-choice questions with choices of A, B, C, D, and E, that were represented in the study with the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. Each participant selects the closest and most accurate answer to each question based on their beliefs, attitudes, and ideas. The survey has been reviewed by an independent Department of Defense (DoD) organization and licensed by assigning the DoD Survey License Exemption (# 9)—Exempt # 0103. The result of all 21 answers collectively determines the student's level of learner autonomy in learning a language. Zhang and Li's LAQ has demonstrated a high level of content validity and a high level of reliability for determining the degree of level of learner autonomy (Koosha,

Abdollahi, & Karimi, 2016). Additionally, the LAQ has been widely used for determining the degree of learner autonomy in learning a foreign language in other countries such as Iran, Yemen, China, and Ethiopia, and has been translated into multiple languages, such as Farsi, Arabic, Amharic, and Thai (Ayash, 2018; Desta, 2020; Koosha et al., 2016).

In-Course Proficiency Tests (ICPTs)

The Arabic language ICPT is a standardized proficiency test comprised of multiple-choice tests for listening comprehension and reading comprehension. Arabic language program students take two ICPTs per semester to prepare for the final Defense Language Proficiency Test, whose scores are used to determine graduation status. Only the students in semesters two and three (ICPT 201, 202 and 301, and 302) were permitted to access the LAQ link using their DLIFLC email accounts, and only these students accessed and completed the LAQ. The participants' most recent Arabic reading and listening ICPT scores were collected from their respective instructors.

Analysis

The Pearson correlation and simple linear regression were used for the analysis of data. The LAQ and the Arabic listening and reading ICPT results for each student were paired up in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and analyzed. A bivariate Pearson correlation measure was conducted to investigate the correlation between the LAQ and listening and reading ICPT variables. The bivariate Pearson correlation indicates whether or not there is a statistically significant association between two continuous variables (Green & Salkind, 2017; Mcleod, 2019). A simple linear regression test was conducted to measure whether the LAQ result of a student could potentially predict his or her achievement on the Arabic listening and reading ICPTs. The bivariate Pearson correlation and simple linear regression statistical findings provided inferential information to answer the first and second research questions of the current study. The statistical results were used to reject or accept the predetermined hypotheses. The relationship between the LAQ and listening and reading ICPTs variables was studied, with no intervention.

RESULTS

The findings revealed a significant direct and positive relationship between the higher scores in the LAQ and the higher scores on the Arabic ICPT listening and reading. The statistical information also indicated that the LAQ scores could be a possible predictor of student performance in the ICPTs.

To examine the correlation between the LAQ and ICPT listening and reading, a bivariate Pearson correlation test was conducted for ICPT Listening Comprehension (ICPT-LC) and ICPT Reading Comprehension (ICPT-RC). The Pearson correlation results in Table 1 show a statistically significant positive relationship between LAQ and ICPT-LC scores, $r = .23$, $p = .03$.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of LAQ, ICPT-LC, and ICPT-RC

			Statistic	Std. Error
LAQ (Learner Autonomy Question-naire)	Mean		71.44	.727
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	70.00	
		Upper Bound	72.89	
	5% Trimmed Mean		71.42	
	Median		71.00	
	Variance		45.40	
	Std. Deviation		6.7	
	Minimum		57	
	Maximum		87	
	Range		30	
	Interquartile Range		9	
	Skewness		.110	.260
	Kurtosis		-.425	.514
ICPT_LC (In-course Proficiency Test for Listening Compre-hension)	Mean		74.90	1.484
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	71.94	
		Upper Bound	77.85	
	5% Trimmed Mean		75.22	
	Median		75.00	
	Variance		189.48	
	Std. Deviation		13.7	
	Minimum		40	
	Maximum		98	
	Range		58	
	Interquartile Range		20	
	Skewness		-.287	.260
	Kurtosis		-.464	.514
ICPT_RC (In-course Proficiency Test for Reading Compre-hension)	Mean		84.08	1.228
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	81.64	
		Upper Bound	86.52	
	5% Trimmed Mean		84.62	
	Median		86.50	
	Variance		129.61	
	Std. Deviation		11.4	
	Minimum		57	
	Maximum		100	
	Range		43	
	Interquartile Range		15	
	Skewness		-.688	.260
	Kurtosis		-.314	.514

Table 2 shows that the significant value is smaller than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. Thus, there is a direct and positive correlation between students' level of learner autonomy in learning the Arabic language and their performance on the Arabic listening comprehension ICPT.

Table 2
Correlations of LAQ and ICPT-LC

		LAQ	ICPT_LC
LAQ	Pearson Correlation	1	.23[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.030
	N	86	86
ICPT_LC	Pearson Correlation	.23[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	
	N	86	86

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The bivariate Pearson correlation test results in Table 3 below for the LAQ and ICPT-RC scores indicated a statistically significant positive relationship, *r* = .26, *p* = .016.

Table 3
Correlations of LAQ and ICPT-RC

		LAQ	ICPT_RC
LAQ	Pearson Correlation	1	.26[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.016
	N	86	86
ICPT_RC	Pearson Correlation	.26[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	
	N	86	86

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 3 above illustrates that the significant value is smaller than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. Thus, there is a direct and positive correlation between students' level of learner autonomy in learning the Arabic language and their performance on the Arabic reading comprehension ICPT.

Table 4
Regression Coefficient LAQ on ICPT-LC (N = 86)

Variable	*B*	*ß*	*SE*
Constant	40.70		15.6
Learner Autonomy (LAQ)	0.48	0.23	0.22
R^2	0.06		

A simple linear regression test was conducted two times to check if the students' LAQ scores could predict students' scores on the ICPT-LC and ICPT-RC. The first simple linear regression test evaluated the predictive power of LAQ scores on ICPT listening comprehension scores, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 illustrates the potential influence of the student's level of learner autonomy in learning the Arabic language on the Arabic listening comprehension ICPT results. The R^2 value of .06 revealed that the predictor variable (LAQ) explained 6% of the variance in the outcome variable with $F(1, 84) = 4.9$, $p = .03$. The significant value is smaller than .05; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. Thus, the findings indicated that the LAQ scores could be a possible predictor for students' performance in the ICPT-LC, but the predictive power is weak (ß = .23, $p < .05$).

Similarly, the second simple linear regression test evaluated the predictive power of LAQ scores on ICPT reading comprehension scores, as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5
Regression Coefficient LAQ on ICPT-RC (N=86)

Variable	*B*	*ß*	*SE*
Constant	52.90		12.80
Learner Autonomy (LAQ)	0.44	0.26	0.18
R^2	0.07		

Table 5 shows the potential influence of students' level of learner autonomy in learning the Arabic language on their Arabic reading comprehension ICPT scores. The R^2 value of .07 revealed that the predictor variable (LAQ) explained 7% of the variance in the outcome variable with $F(1, 84) = 6.03$, $p = .016$. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis because the significant value is smaller than .05. The findings indicated that the LAQ scores could be a possible predictor of students' performance in the ICPT-RC, but the predictive power is weak (ß = .26, $p < .05$).

The outcomes produced by this study shed light on the type and direction of the relationship between the students' level of learner autonomy in learning Arabic as a foreign language and their achievements on the Arabic listening and reading Proficiency Tests. Additionally, the results of the statistical analysis indicated that the LAQ scores could be a possible predictor for students' performance in listening and reading comprehension proficiency tests. However, the predictive power of LAQ scores on students' outcomes on the Arabic listening and reading comprehension proficiency tests was found weak.

DISCUSSION

This study achieved its proposed objectives, and the findings add to the growing body of knowledge highlighting the importance of promoting LA in learning a foreign language. Even though the results confirmed a positive and direct correlation, the statistical analyses indicated a weak predictive power of learners' level of learner autonomy on students' scores on the Arabic

listening and reading ICPTs. This result could be because of the time of the study. The current research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a negative impact on overall language learning at the DLIFLC. There could also be some other explanations. First, unlike the study in other contexts, students in this research studied Arabic rather than English. Second, DLIFLC students are U.S. military service members and may have a different motivation to study Arabic than most of the student participants in other studies, who seem to have largely been university students. Finally, DLIFLC students study Arabic full-time, whereas most of the participants in other studies probably take only one English class per semester. The findings of this study are still significant not only for DLIFLC Arabic language educators, students, curriculum developers, and faculty professional development trainers but also to benefit other foreign languages and learning institutions. The recommendations are as follows:

Provide opportunities for students to reflect on their LA skills throughout the course

The first recommendation for practice is to provide opportunities for students to reflect on their use of autonomous learning skills in learning foreign languages periodically throughout the foreign language program. For example, a learner autonomy questionnaire (such as that used in this study or one that is more relevant to the teaching context) can be administered at key times throughout students' coursework. Instructors can analyze questionnaire results and keep records for each student. Identifying students with lower scores in the early stage of a course would enable teachers and support offices to intervene and help students improve their autonomous learning skills. Many studies have found that autonomous learning skills are not inherited and can be acquired by ongoing and consistent practices (Erturk, 2016; Gholami, 2016; Yuliani & Lengkanawati, 2017); therefore, providing opportunities for students to reflect on their LA skills periodically is crucial.

Raise students' awareness about the significance of LA in learning Arabic and introduce them to practices and competencies that enhance autonomous learning skills

The second recommendation for practice is developing some type of Learner Autonomy Workshop for language learners. Workshops would serve to boost students' awareness about the importance of learner autonomy in learning a foreign language and introduce them to evidence-based practices that promote autonomous learning skills. Workshops could be offered periodically and include a follow-up system, for example, a portfolio or journal, to ensure students implement autonomous learning strategies inside and outside the classroom.

Many studies have confirmed that students with a high awareness of learner autonomy and practices that promote learner autonomy achieve a high level of language proficiency (Dogan & Mirici, 2017; Erturk, 2016; Szocs & Jozsef, 2017). Similar to the current study's findings, many previous studies revealed a positive relationship between students' knowledge of learning strategies, their success in learning a foreign language, and the need for developing a sort of learning strategies awareness training for students (Bajrami, 2015; Ceylon, 2015; Ranjan & Philominraj, 2020).

Raise teachers' awareness about the importance and positive impact of LA on achieving higher levels of language proficiency

The third recommendation is to offer workshops for teachers, highlighting the importance of promoting learner autonomy from a language educator's perspective and providing evidence-based teaching methodologies that promote autonomous learning skills. Many studies have documented teachers' insufficient knowledge and their concerns about the feasibility of promoting learner autonomy (Ayash, 2018; Dogan & Mirici, 2017; Szocs & Jozsef, 2017). Moreover, many studies have confirmed that experienced teachers with adequate awareness and education about learner autonomy implemented autonomy practices more often and effectively than teachers with insufficient knowledge (Asiri & Shukri, 2018; Azin et al., 2019; Khairallah et al., 2020; Liu, 2015; Smith et al., 2018; Yagcioglu, 2018). Samples of strategies and practices that promote autonomous learning inside and outside of classrooms can be included in the workshops.

Integrate Autonomous Learning Practices in curricular and extracurricular activities

The fourth recommendation is regarding curriculum and materials development. Previous studies have acknowledged that a single training session will likely be insufficient to help students develop learner autonomy, and students likely need to practice autonomous learning skills in an ongoing manner (Gholami, 2016). Incorporating learning practices that foster learner autonomy in the foreign language curriculum and implementing them consistently in the classroom is critical (Alonazi, 2017; Yasmin & Sohail, 2018). The current study outcomes can be used by curriculum and materials developers as further evidence of the importance of incorporating curricular and extracurricular supplemental activities that promote autonomous learning skills.

CONCLUSION

The knowledge derived from this study revealed a statistically significant direct and positive relationship between students' level of learner autonomy and their scores in the Arabic listening and reading comprehension ICPTs. The findings showed the scores generated by the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire were positively and directly associated with Arabic listening and reading ICPT scores. Thus, the study concluded that promoting learner autonomy in learning a foreign language may positively impact students' scores on foreign language proficiency tests. The study's findings were in line with previous studies investigating similar research questions. Although the current study documented a statistically significant direct and positive relationship between LAQ and ICPTs, the predictive power of learner autonomy on students' achievement in the Arabic proficiency tests was weak, which opened doors for future studies. Future researchers' aims could be to investigate the roles of teachers and language curricula in relationship to students' learner autonomy and their achievement on Arabic proficiency tests. A replication of the current study with students engaged in standard face-to-face learning is highly recommended for future researchers.

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