Exploring the Relationship between Intrapersonal Intelligence and Learner Autonomy among TEFL Learners

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Abstract: This study mainly aimed to examine the relationship between TEFL learners’ intrapersonal intelligence and learners’ autonomy. To fulfill the objectives of this study, 80 TEFL learners who studied English at Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht Branch were selected based on random sampling and given two types of questionnaire: A questionnaire of emotional intelligence by Bar-on (1997) as well as a questionnaire of learners’ autonomy developed by Asadinik and Mirza Suzani (2015). Based on the results analysis, there found to be a significant positive relationship between intrapersonal intelligence and learners’ autonomy in TEFL learners. Besides, the t-test was computed to determine the significance of difference between male and female on learners’ autonomy questionnaire, on the basis of which no significant difference between male and female learners in autonomy level was revealed.

Key Words: intrapersonal intelligence, learner autonomy, TEFL learners, relationship

Introduction
Nowadays rapid and extensive developments in sciences and technology and emergence of modern perspectives on social, political, economic and cultural issues have brought essential changes in educational system and pedagogy methods. In addition, with the decline of behaviorist psychology and the advent of cognitive psychology, especially constructivist approach in learning, learners are considered as creators of their own learning rather than merely recipients of it.

That is, learners must process information while receiving them and links it to previous experiences, organize their learning and apply them in new situations. Successful adaptation to information age and science and technology explosion requires one's ability and sufficient skills to pursuing information and analyzing it. Recent research shows that for this purpose, it's not...
only intelligence and cognitive capabilities, but also emotional characteristics. Especially emotional intelligence and social skills are of utmost importance (Sharifi, 2008).

According to Wheeler (2009), learners who have intrapersonal intelligence or are ‘self smarts’ are interested in doing a set of activities in language classrooms which are totally different from those enjoyable to learners with interpersonal intelligence. He claims that a learner in the first group sets a goal in the language classroom for himself and follows it; he studies independently; he can talk about his values for language learning; he assesses his knowledge off and on; he has private spaces for studying; he enjoys having individualized language projects; and he has self-teaching instruction. On the other hand, a learner from the second group enjoys having cooperative activities; he has interpersonal interaction; he likes peer teaching; he attends language classes as extracurricular activity; he attends group brainstorming sessions, and considers social gatherings as a context for language learning.

Since the importance of learner autonomy in SLA has generally been proved, the interest of language teachers, educators, and material developers toward the notion is steadily on the increase., there is a need arrive at results upon which teachers and researchers can make a reasonable prediction and judgments., so there is a need for study to explore the relationship between intrapersonal intelligence and learner autonomy of effect of certain characteristics on SLA process.

In this study, the following research question is addressed:

Q1: Is there any significant relationship between student’s intrapersonal intelligence and learner’s autonomy?
Q2: Is there any difference between male and female student in learner autonomy?

Considering the research questions raised above, the following research hypotheses are formulated:

H01. There is no significant relationship between students’ intrapersonal intelligence and their learner’s autonomy.
H02: There is no difference between male and female student’s learner autonomy

1.1 Definition of Key Terms

1.1.1 Intrapersonal Intelligence

Dictionary definition of intelligence can be "an underlying ability that causes a person to function effectively in a certain situation." It is also the ability to comprehend, understand, and benefit from experience. There are different kinds of interrelated intelligence. That is, if one has a capacity in doing a task which requires a special kind of intelligence well, she/he tends to do well on all other tasks requiring other forms of intelligence.
According to Gardner’s theory, eight types of intelligence can develop and be developed over time. Though an individual might enjoy a certain type of intelligence or talent in an activity like language learning, all healthy human beings are able to train their intelligences and develop them in their lifetime. So, learners need to identify what kind of intelligence gives them more opportunity to learn better and, then, strengthen it in order to achieve the desirable results. If a language learner enjoys a certain type of intelligence, say mathematical intelligence, then, he would most likely enjoy creating and recreating patterns in his learning. Or, a learner with linguistic intelligence is more successful in learning through reading and writing.

For most of the 20th century, especially since World War I, intelligence was defined by intelligence quotient (IQ) and was a good predictor of general success in school and at work. In the late 20th century, researchers became convinced that success in work and life was attributable to more than just general intelligence (i.e., IQ). Gardner (1995) and Sternberg and Lubart (1996) suggested that general intelligence accounts for only 10 to 20% of academic and career success. Goleman (1995, 1998) and others have been quick to claim that EI accounts for some or most of the remaining 80 to 90%. These claims are debatable, for sure, as the extant research about the predictive power of intelligence has mixed results. However, the conversation about what comprises the difference is worthwhile.

A broad EI model was developed by Bar-On (1997), who defines EI as an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that affect one’s ability to deal with life’s demands and pressures. Bar-On operationalized his model according to 15 conceptual components that pertain to five emotional and social intelligence domains. The five domains are (a) intrapersonal, (b) interpersonal, (c) adaptability, (d) stress management, and (e) general mood.

Similar to the faculty of interpersonal intelligence is that of intrapersonal intelligence - our cognitive ability to understand and sense our "self." Intrapersonal intelligence allows us to tap into our being - who we are, what feelings we have, and why we are this way. A strong intrapersonal intelligence can lead to self-esteem, self-enhancement, and a strength of character that can be used to solve internal problems. Conversely, a weak intrapersonal intelligence - as is the case of autistic children - prevents even a recognition of the self as a separate entity from the surrounding environment. Intrapersonal intelligence often is not recognized from the outside unless it is conveyed in some form, whether it be intangible as rage or joy, or tangible as a poem or a painting.

1.1.2. Learner Autonomy

Over the last two decades, the concept of LA has gained broader acceptance, becoming a buzz-word within the context of language learning (Little, 1991, as cited in Thanasoulas, 2000). However, the concept of LA in higher education is still under development. Merriam-Webster (1993) defines autonomy as “the quality or state of being self-governing” (p. 78). Autonomy refers to the management of one’s own affairs rather than being dependent upon or controlled by another. Considering this definition in the context of general learning, Chene (1983) defines
autonomy of the learner as “…independence and the will to learn. Autonomy is a structure which makes possible the appropriation of learning by the learner” (p. 46).

Higher education administrators and faculty can help reduce barriers to learning by becoming facilitators of learning. Adult learners should be recognized as potential co-creators of knowledge. In most adult learning situations, the power distance between the teacher and the learner is modified. The teacher neither controls nor manages; he or she provides information and advice to help learners manage their own learning projects (Tough, 1971). Yet, self-directed learners often need assistance because they do not know what resources are available or what activities are necessary for learning, nor are they able to estimate their current level of performance (Tough, 1967).

Literature Review

2.1. Learner Autonomy

Raz (1986) asserts that in an autonomous life, an individual can select the goals and all that is needed for a healthy life (as cited in Benson 2008). So on the basis of Raz's view autonomy is “individual freedom and human rights for making individual choices” (p. 5). So it can be concluded that learning autonomy is needed in all life not for special period or context.

Benson & Voller (1997) have considered five phases for autonomy: the first one is relates to the situations that learners study by themselves; the second one deals with a number of skills that can be learned and used in self-directed learning; the third refers to the potentials that is stopped by institutional education; the fourth phase is for responsibility practice that individuals need for their own learning; and the last one is the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

2.2. Learner’s role and teacher’s role

The learner’s role in an autonomous environment is not that of a passive receiver of information. Learners are the makers of their own fortune and valued members of a learning community that is their class. Autonomous learners have the ability and willingness to learn on their own. Learners become successful if they take responsibility for their own learning. It is up to learners if they want to learn (Lowes & Target, 1999)!

In an autonomous classroom, teachers do not play the role of imparters of information or sources of facts. Their role is more that of a facilitator. The teacher’s position is to manage the activities in the classroom and help learners plan their learning both for long and short term. The teacher has to be able to establish a close collaboration with the learners and make sure that all learners know what is expected of them at all times (Lowes & Target, 1999).

Teachers have the role of counselors. They need to inform learners and make them capable of choosing the best learning strategies. Learners have to be able to make informed choices. This means knowing the rationale behind the strategies and having time to experiment to find which suits best for each occasion. Teachers must, however, be careful not to guide the learners implicitly to the strategies they themselves prefer (Nunan, 2003).

2.3. Intrapersonal intelligence
The notion of Emotional Intelligence (EI) has generated an expansive interest in both lay and scientific field.

Research shows that social and emotional skills are correlated to success in many areas of life, including effective teaching, student learning, quality relationships, and academic performance (Brackett & Salovey, 2004; Sutten & Weatley, 2003). Generally, most of the studies indicate that emotional intelligence has a significant effect on learning a second or foreign language (e.g., Petrides & Furnham, 2000; Pishghadam, 2008).

Intelligence has been taken into account differently in the literature. Once considered as a unidirectional concept (Binet, 1907), it is now known as a multiple concept (Gardner, 1983). Gardner (2003) believes that as a species, individuals possess not single “g” intelligence but a set of autonomous intelligences. Whether unitary or multiple, it refers to the ability or talent to comprehend, understand and use experience to function effectively in different situations. Considering it as a multiple concept, Gardner states that there are eight types of intelligence:

interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, logical-mathematical, musical, linguistic, spatial, and naturalistic.

Gardner’s (1999) theory of multiple intelligences considers intelligence as having special abilities or talents in any of these aspects. According to him, all individuals possess these abilities to different extents, and they can develop them over time. He claims that applying any of these intelligences depends on personal preferences and also on the situation (Mantzaris, 1999).

2.4.Empirical research on learner autonomy in EFL learners

Many researchers have been recently interested to the relationship among learner autonomy and language learning. Dafei (2007) has done a study to investigate the correlation between students’ English proficiency and their level of autonomy and found a positive significant correlation between his students’ English proficiency and their level of autonomy.

In another study, based on the comparison between the subjects in China and Europe, Zhang and Li (2004) concluded that learner autonomy was closely related with the language proficiency levels.

Bayat (2008) in a study investigated the relationship between autonomy perception and classroom behaviors of students learning English as a foreign language. The data of the research was gathered with Autonomy Perception Scale and Classroom Behaviors Scale. Significant relationship was found between autonomy and classroom behaviors.

Methodology

3.1.Participants

To fulfill the objectives of this study, 80 MA TEFL learners who studied English teaching at Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht Branch were selected voluntarily and were given two questionnaires. 9 male and 62 female students participated in this study. There was no limitation in age and gender because of restriction of students.
3.2. Data Collection Procedure

To achieve the purpose of this study and address the questions posed, certain procedures were pursued. 80 TEFL students of M.A. at Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht Branch were selected based on random sampling. First, the researcher obtained permission from the professors to visit their classes and explained the purpose of the study to the students. Before administering the questionnaires, the participants were fully briefed on the process of completing the questionnaires; this briefing was given in Persian through explaining and exemplifying the process of choosing answers. Moreover, the researcher intentionally randomized the order of administered questionnaires to control for the impact of order upon the completion process and validity of the data.

The researcher randomly observed the process of filling out for some individuals to make sure they were capable to fully understand the questions and how to respond them. Because of some potential misunderstanding of vocabularies and concepts that was used in English version of Bar-on, the Persian version of Bar-on was used, and so the participants were asked to fill the Persian version of Bar-on. It should be added that the whole length of the class period (i.e., 90 minutes) devoted to administrating these questionnaires. Subsequently, the administrated questionnaires were scored to specify the participants’ emotional intelligence score and the degree of learner’ autonomy. This was followed by the statistical analyses which were elaborated in due course.

3.3. Instruments

In order to accomplish the purpose of the study, a questionnaire of autonomy as well as the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-On EQ-i) were utilized. Thus, the instruments used in this study were as follows:

3.3.1. Questionnaire of autonomy

To evaluate the participants’ level of autonomy, a 22-item questionnaire of autonomy developed by Asadinik and Mirza Suzani (2015) was used and administered. The reliability of questionnaire was checked and the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability index was reported as 0.75 that indicated the questionnaire items could fairly robustly measure the attribution of autonomy (Asadinik and Mirza Suzani, 2015).

3.3.2. The Persian Version of Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-On EQ-i)

The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) is a pencil and paper self-report scale. The original version of EQ-I consists of 133 items containing five expansive areas of skills or competencies and 15 factorial components.

In this study, to avoid cross-cultural differences and to make sure Iranian students completely comprehend the content, the translated Persian version of this questionnaire was employed. This adjusted final form was decreased into 90 items and the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability index was reported as .80 (Samouei, 2002). In another study, Dehshiri (2003) reported that the Persian version has generally good internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and construct validity. As he states, Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient was found to be .76 and the results of the factor analysis provided convincing support for the inventory hypothesized structure. This test and its subscales
do have reliability and validity in Iranian culture (Dehshiri, 2003). The grade of intrapersonal intelligence of all participants was calculated by online service of Mabna consultation center.

3.4. Design of the Study

Because the aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between intrapersonal intelligence and learner’s autonomy, so the research was a correlational research in which intrapersonal intelligence was independent variable and learner autonomy was dependent variable. Also, this study was *ex-post-facto* design, since the researcher had no control over the manipulation of the independent variable.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

In the present study, the data analysis was provided in descriptive statistics and inferential statistics as well. Descriptive statistics like mean, standard deviation, and standard error of the mean were obtained. For referential statistics, the collected data were scored and then the results were analyzed using Pearson moment correlation via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 20).

Results and discussion

4.1. Descriptive Statistics of intrapersonal intelligence

The emotional intelligence Questionnaire administered in the study in order to evaluate the participants’ intrapersonal intelligence. The relationship between intrapersonal intelligence with learner autonomy had been administered. The descriptive statistics related to the obtained scores on the instrument appears below in Tables 4.1, 4.1 and 4.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics of intrapersonal Questionnaire Administration</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Statistics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The minimum and maximum scores on this questionnaire were sequentially 48 and 89. The mean and standard deviation of the scores are 76.8873 and 8.11621.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics of learner autonomy

The learner autonomy Questionnaire was administered in the study in order to evaluate the participants’ level of autonomy. The descriptive statistics related to the obtained scores on the instrument appears below in Table 4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.2. Descriptive Statistics of learner autonomy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Statistics</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
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</table>
4.3. Testing the hypothesis

4.3.1. Testing H01

H01. There is no significant relationship between students’ intrapersonal intelligence and their learner’s autonomy.

In order to test the first hypothesis, the researcher carried out the Pearson Product Correlation between the participants’ intrapersonal intelligence and their level of autonomy. In Table 4.3, the value of correlation (r = .603**) at significance level of 0.01 shows a statistically significant and positive relationship between intrapersonal intelligence and learner autonomy of TEFL learners. In another words, increasing of each one corresponds to increasing of another.

Thus, H01 is rejected at 0.00 level of significance and it is concluded that a statistically significant relationship exists between TEFL intrapersonal intelligence and their learner autonomy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learner autonomy</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>54.00</td>
<td>46.2254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (list wise)</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.48871</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

4.3.2. Testing H02

H02: There is no significant difference between male and female learners in learner autonomy.

The t-test was computed to determine the significance of difference between male and female on learner autonomy questionnaire, as shown in Table 4.4 and Table 4.5.
Table 4.5. Means, standard deviations, standard error mean showing differences in scores between Genders on learner autonomy questionnaire.

Table 4.5. Independent Samples Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner autonomy</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: t-value showing differences in scores between Genders on learner autonomy questionnaire.

The mean and standard deviation of male scores are 46.5556 and 5.02770. The mean and standard deviation of female scores are 46.1774 and 4.44833.

The t-test was computed to determine the significance of difference between male and female on learner autonomy questionnaire.

On the basis of the above results, there is no significant difference between male and female learners in autonomy level.

Discussion, conclusions, implications

Discussion

The current study attempted to investigate the possible relationships between TEFL intrapersonal intelligence and their learner autonomy.

As displayed in Table 3 intrapersonal intelligence has a strong, positive relationship with learner autonomy. This study confirms the idea of a research claiming that there was a
relationship between interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences and language learning. (Behjat 2011)

The findings of this study also confirm the ideas of a research claiming that academic achievement is strongly associated with several dimensions of emotional intelligence (i.e., intrapersonal, stress management, and general mood competencies) (Pishghadam, 2008).

Dickinson (1995) characterizes autonomous learners as “those who have the capacity for being active and independent in the learning process; they can identify goals, formulate their own goals, and can change goals to suit their own learning needs and interests; they are able to use learning strategies, and to monitor their own learning” (p.167, in Conttia, 2007). So it can be said that students with high level of EI can be more successful in decision making, self-study, examining themselves and other factors of autonomous learning.

In examining the second hypotheses, there is no significant difference between male and female learners in autonomy level and it confirms the study Varol & Yilmaz (2010) tried to find the differences and similarities between male and female in terms of autonomous language learning activities. The analysis of the relevant data yielded somewhat similar results for both female and male learners.

By developing their intrapersonal intelligence individuals (both male and female) can become more productive and successful at what they do, and help others become more productive and successful too. As a results it can be said that raising intra personal intelligence among students can be a valuable goal in second language acquisition.

Conclusion

The results of this study can provided an empirical evidence for the relationship between intrapersonal intelligence and learner autonomy. The remarkable shift regarding EFL context can persuade majority of researchers to take the new studies in which find all the variables which may affect learners’ learning. Also they can consider different factors which help learners to become independent and responsible in their learning.

Intrapersonal seems to be one of these factors. Pishghadam (2009) explored the pivotal role of emotional intelligence in students’ academic scores in reading, listening, writing and reading. His studies revealed that second language learning was strongly associated with several dimension of emotional intelligence. Social skills, on the other hand, according to Goleman (1998), are “handling emotions in relationships well and accurately reading social situations and networks; interacting smoothly; using skills to persuade and lead, negotiate and settle disputes, for cooperation and teamwork” (p. 318).

Macaskill and Taylor (2010) argued that a small measure of autonomous learning will be beneficial to research in education. Besides, if the development of autonomous learners is one of the major aims of an education system then it is important that we develop tools to assist in its assessment (Chemers et al, 2001).
Independent language learning (ILL) reflects a move towards more learner-centered approaches viewing learners as individuals with needs and rights, who can develop and exercise responsibility for their learning (Hurd & Lewis, 2008). On the other hand, learners with highly developed social skills might not be as stressed over relationships, are better at managing conflict, and are better at elaborating with family and classmates as they strive toward academic goals (Drago, 2004).

From what was mentioned above, we can say that raising intrapersonal intelligence among students can be a valuable goal and an ideal for every educational system as we all believe that education is a means to an end not an end in its own turn. So this study might have clarified some issues attributable to enhance autonomy in language learning.

Implications

Due to the fact that language learning is a multidimensional phenomenon, not only language teachers, but also language learners are required to play their role properly in order to facilitate and optimize this complicated process. Therefore, results of the current study have implications for language learners, encouraging them to become more conscious and autonomous about their best learning styles.

The truth is that some will be more naturally gifted intrapersonal intelligence than others but the good news are that intrapersonal intelligence skills can be learned. (This must be so because intrapersonal intelligence is shown to increase with age.) However, for this to happen, people must be personally motivated, practice extensively what they learn, receive feedback, and reinforce their new skills.

By developing their intrapersonal intelligence individuals can become more productive and successful at what they do and what they learn. They can make decision better and help others become more productive and successful too.

Regarding the results of the study, English (L2) teachers should give more attention to the development of sub factors of emotional intelligence in students, a person with independent character can be an independent learner .students with high self-esteem are more likely become independent learner.(alpha omega academy 2012) When teachers know more about students’ emotional indigence , they can plan their instructions so as to enable their students to have more autonomy.

Also the results of current study may inform foreign language teachers and syllabus designers about the importance of psychological aspects in students and help them to raise this skill to become autonomous learners and to make the process of language learning easier.

References


**Attitudes to Autonomous Language Learning**

**Instructions:**

Below are beliefs that some people have about autonomous language learning. Read each statement and decide if you:

(1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree

There are no right or wrong answers. I am simply interested in your opinion. Please **circle** your answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To learn English successfully you need a good teacher.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>It is important for me to be able to see the progress I make.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>I need the teacher to tell me how I am progressing.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>I have my own ways of testing how much I have learned.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Talking to the teacher about my progress is embarrassing for me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I like trying new things out by myself.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>I like studying alone.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>I have a clear idea of what I need English for.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>I like the teacher to offer help to me.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>I like to look for solutions to my problems by myself.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>I know when I have made an error in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>I like the teacher to set my learning goals.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>I like the teacher to tell me what my difficulties are.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I like the teacher to tell me what to do.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>The teacher should make me work hard.</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>I like the teacher to tell me how long I should spend on an activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The teacher should always explain why we are doing an activity in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I know what independent learning means.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>It is important to make decisions about one’s own learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>As a course participant of, I have the opportunity to make decisions about my learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Effective language learners make decisions about their own learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Using English outside the classroom is important for developing good language skills.</td>
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</table>