

"I was never taught about it": Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy

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Responding to the scant scholarly discussion on pre-service teachers (PSTs) in the area of learner autonomy (LA), this study aimed to enrich the literature by enquiring about PSTs' perceptions of LA and autonomy-supportive instruction (ASI). Framed as an exploratory case study, we recruited six Indonesian English PSTs using snowball and purposive sampling. We enacted four stimulated recall interviews to collect data and using thematic content analysis found that the PSTs exhibited inadequate understanding of LA and ASI. They saw LA as self-access learning with no social aspects in its construction and ASI was defined more to enhancing reactive action than proactive action. Despite some emerging perceptions of a shared responsibility between teachers and students in the classroom, they regarded teachers as predominantly an overpowering decision-maker for almost all classroom educational activities. Correspondingly, the absence of explicit, autonomy-based instruction in PSTs' initial teacher education was viewed as the main reason for their inadequacy. PSTs reflected that their learning experiences in initial teacher education lacked strategic investment. This study suggests making the principles of LA and ASI visible in initial teacher education to prepare PSTs to be future autonomy-supportive teachers.

Introduction

Informed by the pivotal role of learner autonomy (LA) in the educational landscape, numerous studies have uncovered the benefits of LA at both macro and micro-levels of learners' lives. The macro-level accentuates the development of learners' ability to function well as citizens who have self-determination, social responsibility, and critical awareness to live a better life in their community (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). At the micro-level, the essence of this concept lies in its positive impact on developing learners to be responsible for managing their own learning (Holec, 1981; Khotimah et al., 2019). In EFL contexts, LA has been proven empirically to have a positive correlation with English learning enhancement (e.g., Dam, 2011; Little, 2020). Inspired by these promising research reports on LA, there have been up-and-coming inquiries about various aspects of LA. The documented empirical studies have been geared toward uncovering cognitive aspects such as beliefs and perceptions and behavioural aspects or practices. For example, the investigation of teachers' beliefs (Bashiri et al., 2014; Mansooji et al., 2022), teachers' perceptions and practices (Al-Asmari, 2013; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2011; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012), teachers' and learners' perceptions (Khotimah et al., 2019), and teachers' and learners' beliefs and practices on LA (Ahmadianzadeh et al., 2018). The terms belief and perception in those previous studies were used interchangeably referring to how students or teachers see or view LA. In this sense, this study also sees belief and perception as

interchangeable terms standing for similar meanings, on how PSTs view LA and autonomy-supportive instruction (ASI).

The previous studies cited above imply a two-fold conclusion. First, although teachers' beliefs and practices can be complex and sometimes contradictory (Mansooji et al., 2022), it is widely acknowledged that teachers' beliefs and perceptions are just as important as their practices. This is because teachers' pedagogical decisions are heavily influenced by their beliefs and perceptions of specific aspects of the teaching and learning process (Bonner et al., 2020). Furthermore, from a psychological standpoint, belief or perception acts as the best predictor of an individual's decision (Bandura, 1986; Dewey, 1933). Consequently, it is not surprising that many researchers focus on investigating teachers' and students' beliefs and perceptions about LA, as they play a significant role in shaping instructional practices.

Second, despite the wealth of research exploring teachers' and students' beliefs, perceptions, and practices in relation to LA, very few studies have investigated these perspectives from the point of view of pre-service teachers (PSTs). Exploring PSTs' perceptions would provide insightful knowledge about how far they understand LA and ASI, which might be translated into their future teaching practices. Without a sound understanding of LA and ASI, there is no basis for expecting PSTs to advocate learners' autonomy growth in their future classrooms (Baz et al., 2018; Benson, 2011; Manzano-Vázquez, 2018; Teng, 2019). PSTs, also called student teachers, therefore, play a pivotal role in the betterment of future education. In this sense, some systematic endeavour should be devoted to preparing them to serve as future autonomy-supportive teachers (Khotimah et al., 2023; Putro et al., 2022). Knowing how they view LA and the ASI would serve as a helpful baseline to prepare them better.

Therefore, in the context of LA, this exploratory case study is directed to scrutinising PSTs' perceptions of LA as well as ASI with the following guiding questions:

1. How do pre-service teachers (PSTs) perceive learner autonomy (LA) and autonomy-supportive instruction (ASI)?
2. What factors contribute to their emerging perceptions?

Learner autonomy

The concept of LA has evolved over time, initially being closely linked to self-access learning and the idea of learners working independently. However, the current view of LA sees it more as learners taking ownership of their learning experiences for their own benefit (Little, 2020). The shift in the definition of LA suggests that students are not the only ones responsible for determining what and how to learn. Social factors, including the role of teachers, can play an important part in the process. On the same note, the definition of LA in the context of foreign language learning is also undergoing a shift in meaning. Holec (1981, p. 3) termed LA "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." This universally accepted definition puts learners in the role of central learning agents,

wherein they take charge of all learning components such as setting learning objectives, selecting learning activities, making learning materials, monitoring learning progress, and evaluating learning outcomes. In Holec's perspective, language LA was more self-instruction (Little, 2020), focusing on individual-cognitive aspects (Holec, 1985).

To some extent, Holec's notion of LA has been criticised by Little (2020) arguing that Holec's perspective does not involve consideration of how languages are learned in the classroom context. Little (2020) termed language LA "a teaching/learning dynamic in which learners plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate their own learning" (p. 1). In this view, LA is seen not as a mere skill of students, but principally as a product of power-sharing and dialogic interaction between students and teachers.

Specifically, in the EFL context, Khotimah et al. (2019), using the framework of Dang (2012), have synthesised LA attributes in three processes: initiating, monitoring, and evaluating. In the initiating process, autonomous learners are those who have the ability to recognise and understand their learning goals, set personal objectives, plan their learning activities, initiate navigation of learning resources, and actively seek out opportunities to learn. During the monitoring phase, autonomous learners take personal responsibility for controlling their learning, including collaborative work with others. In the evaluating process, autonomous learners have the ability to self-reflect and self-evaluate their learning progress and attainment.

Autonomy-supportive instruction (ASI)

LA is not an innate capacity that is naturally equipped in every individual. It is a malleable capacity that should be developed and enhanced (Benson, 2011). Therefore, enhancing students' LA is not divorced from the teachers as the fundamental social context, creating an autonomy-supportive learning environment in the instruction (Baz et al., 2018; Maulana et al., 2016; Núñez et al., 2015). Psychologically speaking, support for autonomy is linked to the teacher's interpersonal actions, including providing options, encouraging students' initiative, and reducing the teacher's control in the classroom to foster students' internal motivation (Maulana et al., 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2020). In that matter, a teacher is considered to be the one who provides necessary scaffolding and effective disposition without neglecting learners' need for autonomy (Aoki, 2002; Le & Johnson, 2022). Scaffolding in this context is not meant to impair students' feelings of autonomy but rather to help students to be more independent. For instance, assisting the students to be more aware of their essential role in setting learning goals and then providing the necessary guidance on setting relevant and appropriate learning goals.

The term 'supporting LA' is not defined as building a learning environment free of regulations or structures. Lamb (2006) asserted that structure is crucial to providing students with essential information and a possible repertoire of choices to reinforce their own learning. Moreover, Lamb contended that ASI enables students to pursue topics that are relevant to them, driven by their own curiosity and internal motivation. At the same time, ASI provides the necessary structure and guidance to ensure effective learning

outcomes. In this respect, the essence of ASI should be understood as how to provide pedagogical structure in an autonomy-supportive way (Cheon et al., 2020).

Empirically speaking, myriad studies have been devoted to scrutinising the conceptual and practical pedagogical interventions to support learner autonomy (see, e.g., Alexander, 2020; Benson, 2013; 2016; Huang, 2007; Reeve & Cheong, 2021). This section has provided only relevant context for the research focus. In this regard, Benson (2013) highlighted three dimensions of control: learning management, cognitive processes, and language content that teachers should assist students with. Those three dimensions, to some extent, are overlapping and interconnected in nature. The dimension of learning management requires teachers to support students in becoming knowledgeable and skilled in controlling their day-to-day learning, starting with planning, implementation, and evaluation. The cognitive process refers to the control of how language is learned. In this dimension, teachers should help students find effective strategies to learn a language, such as noticing. Lastly, the dimension of learning content concerns how teachers train students to know what and how much language content to learn, such as how to navigate and select language materials from unlimited online sources.

Perceptions of learner autonomy and autonomy-supportive instruction

Teachers' or PSTs' beliefs or perceptions are usually governed by previous experiences, such as experiences during their life episodes as students (Baz et al., 2018; Razeq, 2014). This shows the significant role of a teacher in shaping a student's beliefs or perceptions through a series of either in- or out-of-classroom learning activities. In non-Western contexts, LA is frequently misperceived as self-instruction (Agustina, 2017) and learning without teachers (Khotimah et al., 2019; Khulafiyah et al., 2021). This view indicates that LA is still perceived incomprehensibly. Further, pertaining to the readiness to employ LA, university students such as those in Palestine still disclose their unpreparedness, wherein their perceptions are still ingrained in the teacher-centred model, believing the teacher as a single decision maker (Razek, 2014). However, they believe if they were facilitated to do LA, they would be optimistic about being able to do so. Similarly, Farahani (2014) revealed that Iranian students perceived teachers as dominant agents in pedagogical decision-making. Nevertheless, those participating students stated that they were ready to share responsibility with the teachers.

In Ukraine, Gach (2020) discovered that students in higher education were more inclined to perceive their teachers as controllers rather than facilitators or guides. In contrast, at an international university in Thailand, Swatevacharkul and Boonma (2021) noted a shift in students' perceptions of their teachers' role from being a single authoritative agent to being an authority partner. As a result, students had a greater voice in the learning process. Further, in the Indonesian context, Daflizar and Petraki (2022) reported the trend of Indonesian students' perceptions that tended to see teachers as the ones who are responsible for student's learning. Students in their study disclosed more reactive autonomy than proactive autonomy, meaning that they were likely to be responsible for their learning after their teachers designed the tasks and provided guidance accordingly. In a different context, Indonesian students were observed to perform well in the initiating

and monitoring processes of LA but showed a lack of ability in the evaluating process. However, both students and teachers in Indonesia were found to have an inadequate understanding of LA (Khotimah et al., 2019; Khulaifayah et al., 2021).

Likewise, in supporting autonomy in the classroom, the teachers' instructions were mainly pictured as overlooking the importance of strategic investment (Ahmadianzadeh et al., 2018; Khotimah et al., 2019), such as supporting students to self-evaluate and self-monitor their learning process and learning products. In contrast, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) uncovered that teachers in their study appeared to expose learners to decision-making, resulting in a positive impact on their learning motivation. The above conflicting research results, therefore, call for further scholarship to enrich the existing body of literature. In this sense, these preceding studies overwhelmingly took students' and teachers' perspectives on LA and ASI; the PSTs as the future teachers received inadequate attention, warranting related investigation.

Method

Research context and design

Situated in Eastern culture, education in Indonesia is entrenched in collectivism (Hofstede, 1991; Maulana et al., 2016), which highly values social harmony and interdependence in day-to-day interactions (Uchida & Ogihara, 2012). Collectivist classrooms emphasise the hierarchical perspective in which students tend to see teachers as authoritative individuals to be respected and listened to. Differing from students who are raised in an individualist norm (Western culture), students raised within a collectivist norm tend to be taught 'what to do' rather than 'how to do' (Ho et al., 2004). Furthermore, education in Indonesia is attributed to a dialectic system adopting the teacher-centred approach, in which spoon feeding and high stakes examinations are typical classroom practices (Ho et al., 2004). This postulation is in alignment with a cultural determinist argument that non-Western countries will be less likely to raise the value of ASI than Western countries (Chirkov, 2011). However, some endeavours to enhance LA in Indonesian classrooms have gained increasing attention, either through empirical studies (e.g., Daflizar & Petraki, 2022; Khotimah et al., 2019; Maulana et al., 2016) or the government's policy (Cirocki et al., 2019), penetrating *Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar* (Curriculum of Democratic Education) as the representation of the endorsement of LA in the Indonesian education system.

Framed as an exploratory case study, this research aimed to delve into Indonesian EFL PSTs' perceptions of LA and ASI. The objective was to gain an understanding of the participants' naturalistic accounts in their real-world contexts (Yin, 2014) to prepare them to become autonomy-supportive teachers in the future. The perceptions of LA cover LA's definition and attributes of autonomous learners. The perceptions of ASI encompass how PSTs define teachers' roles and responsibilities in the classroom to support LA. This case study was employed to address the methodological needs of related empirical studies that were mainly quantitative in nature (Basri, 2020). Albeit its vantage points, the quantitative approach possesses limitations in that it does not give sufficient devotion to individual

cases and in-depth understanding. Thus, through an exploratory case study, the investigation would orient toward scrutinising a more comprehensive understanding of a small number of participants (Yin, 2014).

Participants

This study recruited EFL PSTs from a public university in the eastern part of Indonesia through snowball and purposive sampling. Initially, we contacted the president of the student union, who served as a gatekeeper, to identify potential participants who met our criteria: English PSTs who had completed relevant teaching-learning theory and teaching practice courses and had teaching practicum experience. Additionally, we distributed a call for participation through various students' *WhatsApp* groups. We also asked existing participants to refer their acquaintances or friends who could meet our criteria. After a month of recruitment, six PSTs (4 males and 2 females, aged 21-22 years) volunteered to participate in this study. They were from three different ethnicities: Lombok, Sumbawa, and Bima. In addition to their university-based study in the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, the participants had some off-campus experiences. These included practice teaching and practicums, teaching primary to high school students, either facilitated by their university or through their own voluntary initiatives in service learning.

To ensure ethical research practices, students were provided with a comprehensive research profile before the commencement of the study. This included information about their voluntary participation, the confidentiality and safety of the participants, and the foreseeable risks and benefits of the study. The participants were fully informed of the nature of their involvement and provided with the opportunity to ask any questions or seek clarifications before giving their consent. The participants' names were coded into PST1, PST2, PST3, PST4, PST5, and PST6. We also negotiated the time, venue, and language for taking the data, based on participants and researchers' mutual convenience. We also asked for participants' written consent as a legal document of their participation. Some monetary compensation was also granted as a token of appreciation for their time and involvement.

Data collection and analysis

To gather the data, we employed stimulated recall interviews, in which we asked participants to revisit and reflect on specific events or interactions that had occurred. We consider stimulated recall interviews to be an effective and potent research tool because they enable us to explore the dynamic nature of participants' social interactions and gain insight into their subjective experiences (Dempsey, 2010). In addition, Dempsey (2010) suggested that stimulated recall interviews can access information that is typically difficult to obtain, provide detailed and comprehensive data, and improve the reliability and validity of research findings. In this respect, this approach could assist us in obtaining participants' unshared perspectives and experiences regarding their understanding of LA and ASI, as well as their past educational experiences during their initial teacher education. This approach has the potential to offer valuable insights and shed light on important

aspects of the research questions that may have been overlooked or unexplored previously.

In practice, we utilised a set of 12 educational activities that were adapted from Razek's (2014) work, as well as illustrations related to English language teaching and learning, to aid participants in revisiting their experiences and perspectives. During the data collection, we conducted four stimulated recall interviews. The initial two stimulated recall interviews were designed to elicit participants' perspectives regarding their understanding of LA and ASI, as well as the respective roles of teachers and students in academic activities, drawing on their prior educational experiences. The subsequent two stimulated recall interviews aimed to provide a vivid portrayal of their initial teacher education experiences. The questions raised in the stimulated recall interviews were framed as reflective questions, allowing participants to reveal their own contextual voices while at the same time enabling the data collection to focus on the prescribed research questions (Yin, 2015). To obtain comprehensive data while minimising language barriers, we conducted the interviews in either Bahasa Indonesia or English, depending on the preference of each participant (Murray & Wynne, 2001). The stimulated recall interviews lasted between forty minutes to one hour per session for each participant. With participants' consent, we recorded all of the stimulated recall interview sessions for future reference.

We conducted a qualitative analysis of all the collected data using the thematic content analysis method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2016). Before the analysis began, all spoken data were transcribed and any data in Bahasa Indonesia were translated into English. The six steps of thematic content analysis were carried out iteratively, beginning with multiple readings of the data to establish familiarity. We then identified and coded data that could address our research questions before searching for themes based on prominent patterns in the data. We reviewed and named the themes before writing the final report. Throughout the process, we used a bottom-up or inductive approach, letting the themes to emerge from the data. Concepts and previous studies cited in the research were incorporated to enrich the data interpretation. To ensure the credibility of our findings, we employed a member-checking technique. This involved giving participants access to the data and allowing them to engage with it by reading, clarifying, reducing, or providing new insights. This approach, combined with our careful and iterative data collection and analysis, helped to ensure the trustworthiness of our results.

Findings

Findings from this study yielded five emerging themes: (1) LA is a form of self-instruction; (2) more to a reactive autonomy-supportive instruction; (3) teacher as an overpowering agent in decision-making; (4) the absence of explicit autonomy-based instruction in initial teacher education; and (5) the lack of strategic investment in initial teacher education. To give a more complete view of students' perceptions, some data were condensed into tables.

PSTs' perceptions of learner autonomy and autonomy-supportive instruction

Learner autonomy is a form of self-instruction

The data analysis from the stimulated recall interviews suggests that, in general, the participating PSTs perceived that LA is a condition where students are learning by themselves without teachers or other people's help or instruction. PST5 saw:

Learner autonomy is how students could independently learn something that they want to learn without the others' intervention or help. Students can search for learning resources from anywhere as long as these resources could help them learn independently. Students with good learner autonomy actively raise questions, have high curiosity that can stimulate their extended learning. These students are happy to get more homework to learn more. They also know the materials because they learn before the teacher teaches them in the classroom. (PST5)

The data show that the other participating PSTs had similar perceptions of what constitutes good learner autonomy, which includes the ability to independently search for learning resources, learn and understand materials, actively participate in the classroom, display high curiosity, and exhibit intelligence and diligence. The perception of LA as self-instruction was prevalent across all PSTs, meaning that they saw autonomy primarily as an individual's responsibility to manage their own learning. However, PST2 had a more nuanced view of LA that recognised the importance of social factors in promoting autonomy.

I think autonomous students are also socialists because by interacting and communicating with others in social life, they could learn some knowledge or skills from others. (PST2)

PST2 considered that learning from others within social interaction could afford students with more knowledge and related skills. Table 1 recaps the overall data on PSTs' perceptions of LA.

Table 1: PSTs' perceptions of learner autonomy

Learner autonomy is when students are:	Participants
○ searching for learning materials or resources by themselves	PST1, PST2, PST3, PST4, PST5.
○ learning and understand new things by themselves without others' help	PST3, PST4, PST5.
○ doing the learning assignment and tests by themselves	PST6.
○ learning before the teacher's teaching by themselves	PST5, PST6.
○ brave to ask	PST2, PST5.
○ smart	PST1, PST3.
○ diligent	PST3.
○ having high curiosity and high motivation	PST2, PST5.
○ having good sense of social life	PST2.

More to a reactive autonomy supportive-instruction

According to the data, the participating PSTs perceived ASI as a condition in which teachers facilitate independent learning by providing verbal motivation and behavioural encouragement, such as by guiding students, preparing learning tasks and materials, instilling self-study habits, explaining learning objectives, setting up group work and problem-based learning, and delivering engaging teaching. PST4 voiced his concern.

Teachers can be a classroom facilitator answering students' questions that they felt difficult to understand in their learning process. Teachers also can foster students' autonomous learning by providing links directing students to the online materials or preparing materials in the *Google Drive* accessible to students for self- study. (PST4)

In this sense, ASI is understood as a condition when the teachers play a facilitative role in some educational areas, especially by providing links to the online materials or putting materials in cloud platforms, necessitating students to access them by themselves for self-learning. Table 2 encapsulates the in-depth data.

Table 2: PSTs' perceptions of autonomy-supportive instruction

Autonomy-supportive instruction is when the teachers are:	Participants
○ motivating students	PST1, PST2, PST3, PST5.
○ preparing learning tasks requiring students to search the learning resources independently	PST1, PST6.
○ supporting student-centred-learning	PST1, PST3.
○ explaining learning objectives	PST1.
○ serving as a facilitator	PST1, PST4, PST5, PST6.
○ building students' good habits: reading and analysing	PST2.
○ providing relevant and interesting learning materials for self-study	PST2, PST4, PST5.
○ guiding	PST5.
○ controlling students learning	PST5.
○ setting group work	PST6.
○ providing problem-based learning	PST6.
○ not only lecturing	PST6.

In a nutshell, PSTs deemed ASI to be the instruction that centres more on teachers' measures or initiatives to facilitate students' reactive autonomy than proactive autonomy. In this sense, students were expected to be responsible toward their learning, responding to the teachers' pedagogical design for motivating students, explaining the learning objectives, preparing materials and tasks supportive of autonomy, controlling students' learning, and setting well-designed instruction. Some training on how to be responsible in their learning activities, such as on how to set learning goals, search appropriate materials, and identify learning weaknesses, was not articulated from PSTs' perspectives.

Teacher as an overpowering agent in decision making

When they were asked to map their perceptions of students and teachers' educational responsibilities in the classroom, the data suggest that the PSTs regarded teachers as the ones who possessed dominant responsibilities in almost all the educational activities.

Table 3 details PSTs' perceptions of the ones who are responsible for each educational activity.

Table 3: PSTs' perceptions of students and teachers' responsibilities

Educational activities	Whose responsibility?		
	Teachers	Students	Shared
1. To decide the objectives of students' English course	PST1, PST2, PST3, PST4, PST5, PST6.		
2. To decide what students should learn next in English Lessons	PST3, PST4, PST5, PST6.		PST1, PST2.
3. To choose what activities to use to learn English in English lessons	PST1, PST2, PST3, PST6.		PST4, PST5.
4. To decide how long to spend on each activity	PST1, PST2, PST3, PST4, PST6.		PST5.
5. To choose what materials to use to learn English in English lessons	PST3, PST4, PST6		PST1, PST2, PST5.
6. To stimulate the use of English in the classroom	PST3, PST4, PST5.		PST1, PST2, PST6.
7. To stimulate collaborative/cooperative work	PST2, PST4, PST5, PST6.		PST1, PST3.
8. To stimulate students' interest in learning English	PST2, PST6.		PST1, PST3, PST4, PST5.
9. To ensure students make progress during English lessons	PST3, PST4, PST5, PST6.		PST1, PST2.
10. To ensure students make progress outside class	PST4.	PST1, PST3, PST6	PST2, PST5.
11. To identify students' weaknesses in English	PST5, PST6.		PST1, PST2, PST3, PST4.
12. To evaluate students' learning of English	PST2, PST3, PST6.		PST1, PST4, PST5.

Table 3 indicates that PSTs amply trusted teachers as the most knowledgeable individuals to direct the learning orientation. The PSTs opined that:

Every topic being taught must have a particular objective which is only teachers who know it. Therefore, learning objectives, learning activities, learning topics, learning period, and so on... should be determined by teachers in order to meet the expected learning objectives. (PST1)

Since teachers can determine what their students' needs by conducting need analysis, they know what materials to deliver and how long to learn. They have the authority to instruct students to work in groups and to fully evaluate students' works because they have the document of students' learning products. (PST2)

Akin to PST1 and PST2, other PSTs such as PST3 and PST6 regarded teachers as "more knowledgeable", while PST4 and PST5 called teachers the "drivers of the classroom orientation", possessing potent power and authority in the decision making and

controlling educational activities. Likewise, PSTs also considered that some educational activities were teachers' responsibility and duties by default. For example, PST3 asserted:

As a teacher, it is her/ his duty to decide the learning objectives, materials, activities, the length of learning, to stimulate the use of English in the classroom, to ensure that students make progress, and evaluate the learning progress accordingly. The teachers know better. (PST3)

Reversely, among the 12 educational activities, students were only considered to have ultimate responsibility for their learning progress outside the classroom, as it is beyond the teacher's supervision. This view was shared by PST1, PST3 and PST6. Table 3 also reveals that, to some extent, some educational activities appeared to be considered a shared responsibility between students and teachers. PSTs believe that students should also be granted some chances to jointly decide some educational activities, such as selecting learning materials, maintaining the use of English in the classroom, identifying students' learning weaknesses, and evaluating learning progress. However, during follow-up interviews, the PSTs were unsure about how students and teachers could effectively engage in shared activities in practice.

Factors contributing to their emerging perceptions

The absence of explicit autonomy-based instruction in initial teacher education

Investigating the source of their perceptions yielded an interesting finding. All of the participating PSTs were not adequately familiar with the LA construct. Only PST1 and PST5 asserted that they had been superficially informed about LA in English language learning.

I have heard about learner autonomy before, but not in detail, it is superficial knowledge. I frequently heard about it, but I do not know exactly what it is. Then, what I consider about LA is only my personal perception. I think learner autonomy is when students do not only wait for learning materials from the teachers but they must search for those materials by themselves. (PST1)

I have heard the term "learner autonomy" but only at a glance and never been detailed. Even, like only instructions with no description about what it is. I heard about it in the classroom, on my campus. Some lecturers seemed to use the concept of learner autonomy in their teaching such as explaining what to learn next and then assigning us to freely search for the resources. We were assigned to understand and search for the materials independently. But, I am not sure. (PST5)

The other four PSTs affirmed that they never knew about LA. PST2, PST3, PST4 and PST6 stated that they were not familiar with LA and just knew the term by the time they were participating in this study.

I never heard about learner autonomy in English teaching-learning. This is new for me, I am not familiar. I was never taught about it on campus. The lecturers might have used the concept in teaching, but I was not informed about it. (PST6)

The lack of strategic investment in initial teacher education

When the PSTs were asked to recall how they were taught in their initial teacher education, they narrated that, to some extent, their lecturers' teachings tended to facilitate PSTs to choose the materials, stimulate the use of English, encourage collaborative work, and stimulate their interests. For example, PST2 recalled their learning experiences in initial teacher education as follows:

They [lecturers] freed us to use other sources related to the materials discussed in the classroom. Students were usually motivated using English. They [lecturers] highly suggested students to discuss and present materials using English. Lecturers also designed learning activities by involving students in solving given problems, this is usually named as a group work assignment and it should be done collectively. (PST2)

The form of facilitation was seen mostly in the form of verbal encouragement and inspiring stories on how to learn English better.

To stimulate our interest, the lecturers usually told us stories about their past experiences to inspire and motivate us in learning English. (PST6)

The follow-up interview yielded extended data indicating that the lecturers did not either explain the principles of learner autonomy or train PSTs to do so. PSTs saw that their lecturers' instructions lacked strategic investment. In general, the lecturers were perceived by PSTs as not facilitating PSTs in deciding their English learning objectives, what they should learn next, how long they should learn, ensuring that they make progress in and outside the classroom, identifying their weaknesses in learning English, and evaluating their English learning. In addition to verbal encouragement and inspiring stories, the lecturers were seen to merely perform what they did in their day-to-day teaching, letting students interpret for themselves. For example:

Some lecturers did reflection to identify what topics have not been understood well. Then those lecturers would reexplain those topics. (PST1)

Lecturers will evaluate students' learning products by seeing their students' work in detail, then providing feedback accordingly. (PST5)

Those sampled lecturers' pedagogical activities were not frequently followed with some explanation of the importance of those activities or some training on how PSTs could do those activities.

Discussion

Undertaken as an exploratory case study, our purpose was to examine Indonesian EFL PSTs' perceptions of LA and ASI and the underlying factors. The findings show that Indonesian EFL PSTs disclose an incomprehensive understanding of LA. This finding is consistent with previous research by Khotimah et al. (2019) on the perceptions of LA by Indonesian teachers and students. It also echoes the findings of Agustina (2017) in their study on Indonesian teachers' understanding of LA and Khulaifiyah et al. (2021) in their

exploration of the perceptions of Indonesian EFL students towards autonomous learning activities. It indicates that, akin to teachers and students, Indonesian EFL PSTs also need facilitation for better understanding LA (Khotimah et al., 2023; Putro et al., 2022). In this case, the PSTs' understanding of LA was limited to self-instruction or self-access learning, without considering the social aspects that contribute to its construction.

The PSTs' understanding of autonomous learners was limited to those who independently search for learning resources, comprehend materials, ask questions, exhibit curiosity, and display intelligence and diligence without relying on teachers. This simplistic view of the construct of LA overlooks the multifaceted nature of autonomy. The PSTs might see it only in terms of autonomy that they perceived as doing educational activities by themselves. Conceptually, self-instruction or self-access learning was in harmony with the initial LA, postulated by Holec (1981), to facilitate adult learners who were not able to attend the classroom to learn by themselves by accessing learning materials and learning those materials independently. However, in the context of today's EFL classrooms, LA should be understood as learning for themselves rather than by themselves (Little, 2020). Autonomous learners who are responsible for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning (Little, 2020) are the product of power sharing and dialogic interaction between teachers and students (Khotimah, 2019; Little, 2020).

The PSTs' perceptions of ASI were focused mainly on reactive autonomy, wherein teachers were seen as facilitators who assist students to learn autonomously by motivating them, explaining the learning objectives, preparing materials and tasks, controlling learning, and providing well-designed instruction. This perspective suggests that students were expected to be autonomous learners by responding to the teacher's instructional design. However, PSTs did not consider proactive autonomy, such as providing training on setting learning goals, searching for appropriate materials, and identifying learning weaknesses, as a responsibility of teachers. This finding is similar to Daflizar and Petraki (2022) who found that Indonesian students tended to display more reactive autonomy than proactive autonomy. There is a need to highlight the importance of proactive autonomy in teacher education programs to prepare future teachers who can support students' autonomy in a more comprehensive manner.

Furthermore, PSTs in this study had a tendency to see teachers as an overpowering agent in the decision-making process for almost all educational activities (Razek, 2014). The students were seen as passive agents responsible only for ensuring their learning outside the classroom. In this case, the stereotype of non-Western culture with the dialectic system by which teachers were seen as authoritative individuals to be respected and listened to, is still found (Ho et al., 2004; Uchida & Ogihara, 2012). However, there were some views starting to believe that students should also be granted some chances to jointly decide some educational activities, such as selecting learning materials, maintaining the use of English in the classroom, identifying students' learning weaknesses, and evaluating learning progress. Even though the PSTs were not sure about how to engage in shared responsibility, this finding shows some positive signs towards the enactment of LA.

Recent studies suggest that shared responsibility for language learning activities can promote greater learner autonomy and enhance language learning outcomes (Little, 2020). Therefore, emphasising the importance of shared responsibility in language learning and providing training on how to engage in shared responsibility may help PSTs develop a more comprehensive understanding of autonomy and enhance their language learning outcomes. It is crucial to undertake systematic efforts to prepare students to participate effectively in educational activities alongside the teachers' facilitation, creating ASI (Aoki, 2002; Baz et al., 2018; Lamb, 2006; Le & Johnson, 2022; Núñez et al., 2015; Putro et al., 2022). Principally, students should be treated as fully agentive partners in the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of learning through a dialogic learning interaction (Little, 2020; Swatevacharkul & Boonma, 2021). This finding in Indonesian EFL PSTs aligns with some previous studies of students or teachers' perceptions (Daflizar & Petraki, 2022; Farahani, 2014).

In answering the second research question on the underlying factors contributing to the emerging perceptions, some thought-provoking findings were uncovered. First, the absence of explicit ASI in their initial teacher education was perceived to be the main factor contributing to their incomprehensive understanding of LA and ASI. It was observable that all of the participating PSTs were not adequately familiar with the constructs of LA and ASI. Four of them stated that they never knew LA and ASI prior to this study, while the other two asserted that they knew the constructs superficially in their initial teacher education. Some lecturers used the terms in the classroom but did not explicitly introduce the constructs to the PSTs. This condition echoes the documented literature on the role of past learning experiences in governing current beliefs or perceptions (Baz et al., 2018; Razeq, 2014). This result suggests that the PSTs' limited understanding of LA and ASI is reasonable, as they were not adequately introduced to these concepts during their own education. Therefore, expecting teachers or PSTs to play a central role in promoting LA in their classrooms without prior training is unrealistic (Manzano-Vázquez, 2018). Without a sound understanding of LA and ASI, it is difficult to expect PSTs to encourage their future students' autonomy growth (Benson, 2011; Teng, 2019). Providing PSTs with training and guidance on these concepts may be necessary to foster a deeper understanding and implementation of LA and ASI in the classroom.

Second, the PSTs' narratives indicated that the PSTs' teacher training lacked a focus on strategic investment and learning management (Benson, 2013), which are essential for promoting learner autonomy. The teacher educators focused primarily on monitoring processes such as choosing materials and stimulating interest through verbal encouragement or motivating stories (Baz et al., 2018), but did not provide technical training on initiating and evaluating the learning process. The PSTs were therefore not adequately prepared to help their future students become autonomous learners. This finding is consistent with the PSTs' perceptions of reactive rather than proactive ASI, which highlights the importance of teachers providing strategic guidance for autonomous learning. The lack of focus on strategic investment in teacher training has also been noted in previous studies (e.g., Ahmadianzadeh et al., 2018; Khotimah et al., 2019; Khulafiyah et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Understanding how Indonesian EFL PSTs view LA and ASI is fundamental to informing how English teacher educators or initial teacher education curriculum developers prepare PSTs to be autonomy-supportive teachers in the future. This exploratory case study has led us to depict Indonesian EFL PSTs' perceptions of LA and ASI and the contributing factors to their emerging perceptions. The findings indicate that they did not have an adequate understanding of LA as well as ASI. Their understanding of LA is mainly limited to self-instruction or self-access learning, overlooking social aspects in its construction. PSTs tended to see ASI as a condition where teachers' played a facilitative role in educational activities. However, the PSTs' perceptions of autonomy support were found to focus mainly on reactive autonomy rather than proactive autonomy. This could be attributed to their upbringing in a collectivist society with a teacher-centred educational system. The PSTs felt that teachers were still predominantly seen as overpowering decision-makers who were responsible for making most of the educational decisions, despite some opinions advocating for shared responsibility between teachers and students. In this respect, the absence of explicit autonomy-based instruction in their initial teacher education was viewed as the main reason for their inadequacy. The PSTs recalled that their learning experiences in initial teacher education lacked strategic investment as a fundamental aspect of enhancing their learning autonomy.

Findings from this study may inform future initial teacher education programs in Indonesia or other countries with similar contexts on how to provide appropriate support to make PSTs aware of LA and ASI in principles and practice. This study suggests some endeavour to make the principles of LA and ASI visible in initial teacher education, for preparing PSTs to be future autonomy-supportive teachers. Practically, initial teacher education curriculum developers are expected to design EFL PST curriculum supportive of LA encompassing PSTs' cognitive and behavioural aspects. Teacher educators should aim to cultivate PSTs' understanding of LA and ASI by incorporating these principles into both theoretical and practical aspects of the curriculum. Students should be empowered and equipped to become active and independent participants in all stages of their learning, including planning, implementation, and evaluation, through a collaborative and dialogic learning process. Researchers need to explore practical strategies to integrate the principles of LA and ASI into initial teacher education programs.

Apart from its valuable contribution to the advancement of EFL teaching-learning in particular and education in general, this study possesses a number of limitations. First, the small number of participants recruited in the study limits the generalisability of the research findings. The second limitation is the use of self-reported data from stimulated recall interviews has constrained researchers' ability to understand reality beyond the reported data. Third, the study's sole reliance on PSTs as the source of data limits the discussion on their previous learning experiences in initial teacher education to only their perspectives, without considering the viewpoints of teacher educators involved in their training. Future research might be suggested to scrutinise similar scholarship using observations to enrich and triangulate data from self-reported data collection. Inviting

teacher educators along with the PSTs is likely to yield richer data on the link between the PSTs' perceptions and their previous learning experiences. Additionally, how LA and ASI are reflected in PSTs' teaching practicums or practices also warrants empirical study.

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