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LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVE OF AUTONOMOUS LEARNING

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INTRODUCTION

Autonomy has been of great interest and is watched keenly in different educational areas. A Japanese educational theme also foregrounded the importance of ability to think and learn of one's own accord. This ability has closer resemblance with autonomy and according to Japanese society we need this autonomy in order to get succeeded in every walk of life. Umeda (2000 p.61-69) identified three basic reasons which shows the importance of autonomy from general educational perspective.

1. Promoting survival capacity to deal with fast societal changes.
2. Flourishing learners distinctiveness
3. Upgrading the learner's educational and cultural background.

According to Benson (2001) it is of great benefit to develop such capacity with which one can take control of his or her own learning. Knowles (2001) said that in education our main purpose is to help individuals in developing attitude that to learn something is long lasting process so they should acquire the skill of autonomous learning.

William and Burden (1997 p. 147) cited that In ESL and EFL different scholars and researchers indicate the importance of autonomy from different point of views including pertinence to strategies of language learning.

Scharle and Szabo (2000) in language learning success mostly depend on the responsible attitude of language learners (p.4). Autonomy is also very important in learning language effectively. Takauchi (2003, p.113) did his investigation on how to learn language effectively and he reported that those students who were highly achieving and highly skilled people in English language whom he interviewed, dedicated themselves to learn more independently and who were having their own way of learning.

Onozawa Trans, particularly this person does not use the word autonomy but according to him those learners are the most effective learners who try and find their own way of learning.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What role does learners' autonomy play in learning?
2. Is autonomous teaching/learning practiced in our educational institutions?
3. How students would like to be involved in class management?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student independence in outside dialect learning relies upon the capacity and eagerness of the student to finish both particular and general errands, and three territories where this self-sufficiency is most applicable in remote dialect learning is in correspondence, learning, and self-improvement (Littlewood, 1996). Thus, Little (2004b) trusts that "self-governance in dialect learning is supported by three general educational standards: student inclusion, student reflection, and proper target dialect utilize" (p.105).

With regards to dialect adapting, Little (2010) contends that as student self-governance relies upon dialect capability in the objective dialect, the student must be instructed principally in the objective dialect and urged to take different parts (i.e. reacting also, starting discussions) and to build up their capacity for both interior and outer dialect utilize. Additionally, keeping in mind the end goal to cultivate independence in the dialect classroom Balçıkanlı (2008) feels that it is critical to include understudies in choice with respect to their learning.

Additionally, Balçıkanlı (2010) states that students needs to be engaged in process of making decisions that are related to their course objectives, homework tasks and classroom managements and the choice of materials regarding learning.(p.98).

A course plan is one way to encourage autonomy in classroom lessons. For example, asserting that student self-rule in dialect courses requires the moving of obligations from the instructor to the understudy in all parts of the learning procedure from defining learning objectives to assessing understudy advance. According to Cottoral (2000) there are five standards for outlining language courses which foster autonomy.

These five standards "identify with student objectives, the dialect learning process, tasks, learner planning and reflection on learning" (p.110).

Illes (2012) indicates that independence in dialect learning settings requests that Students endeavor to discover answers for different issues without anyone else, to work cooperatively in gatherings and combines, and to build up the devices to evaluate their own particular work also, crafted by their associates. All the more particularly, she guarantees that "introducing students with issues that have no instant answers compels them to actuate their issues tackling limit and to work out answers for themselves" (p.509).

Dang (2012) trusts that a mix of both community ventures (i.e. wrangles about what's more, aggregate undertakings) and individual exercises (i.e. diary composing, perusing) are required to advance student self-governance in the classroom. As such, Dang (2012) states that verbal confrontation, bunch work and individual exercises, for example, intelligent diaries all assistance understudies turn out to be more self-governing students.

Additionally, Thanasoulas (2000) centers around what students can do keeping in mind the end goal to create self-sufficiency, and states that it is useful for understudies to keep in touch with self-reports, journals and assessment sheets. For example, he believes that journals and evaluation sheets "provide understudies the responsibility to plan, screen, and evaluate their learning, identifying any challenges they keep running into and suggesting arrangements." (p.8).

What's more, Thanasoulas (2000) proposes an enticing correspondence between the educator and the students as another approach to advance independence. For him, an enticing correspondence is a method to modify student convictions and demeanors. At the end of the day, such a correspondence can change negative convictions and states of mind into positive, and along these lines can encourage learning.

As to advancing self-rule, Mc Devitt (1997) sees student independence as fundamental for creating essential social aptitudes, for example, viable correspondence, working in groups, arrangements, and stepping up. To help advance this self-rule,

McDevitt (1997) proposes making self-get to communities for understudies, where they can evaluate their own work and report disappointments. In addition, Benson (2011) clears up that such self-get to focuses need to use new PC innovations that give important assets and recreate different situations (situational learning) to encourage dialect learning.

Moreover, contending that "self-coordinated learning includes assuming liability for the targets of learning, self-checking, self-surveying, and going up against dynamic part in learning" (p.282), Lee (1998) clarifies the usage of a self-coordinated learning project and its advantages for college understudies in Hong Kong. This program mulls over five elements which are critical for

creating student self-governance. These elements are intentionality, student decision, adaptability, educator support and companion bolster.

Educators can likewise enable their understudies to wind up independent self-intelligent students by urging them to work cooperatively with others (counting their instructors), stay open to feedback, watch their own particular exercises through tape, and most significantly, give each other input (Balçıkanlı, 2009).

However, as Camilleri (1999) points out, while educators play an important role in promoting student self-sufficiency, their work is influenced by larger national training strategies, particularly national examination frameworks and rigid syllabi, which should be adjusted to foster greater student self-sufficiency.

Studies on autonomous learning from students perceptions

Chan (2001) completed an examination with 20 English dialect understudies in Polytechnic University in Hong Kong to distinguish their discernments with respect to independence. In her investigation, she utilized a survey and meetings to accumulate data concerning understudies' perspectives of student independence. The examination investigates students' prospects of dialect learning, educator and student parts and their discernments with respect to student self-governance. She discovered that while the understudies exhibited gigantic ability to be independent learners, regardless they communicated overwhelming reliance on their instructors to direct them towards such independence.

Additionally Koçak (2003) controlled a poll to 186 English Language private academy understudies at Başkent University in Ankara, Turkey. The point of this considers was to investigate students' preparation for independent learning and their observations with respect to educator parts in learning English. He discovered that while understudies utilized met cognitive systems, for example, self-observing and self-assessment, despite everything they considered the instructor as more in charge of their learning than themselves.

In addition, in an investigation with 219 first year EFL understudies in Japan, Mineishi (2010) centers around contrasts between view of fruitful and less effective students concerning self-sufficiency. In his examination, he discovered that the achievement of students was attached in some approaches to their view of student self-sufficiency, and in spite of what is generally expected in Japanese classrooms, a few understudies sought to learn self-sufficiently as opposed to inactively.

Porto (2007), then again, did an investigation with 95 Argentine, Caucasian understudies at the National University of La Plata in Argentina. The point of this investigation was to recognize the students' impression of exercises and creating student self-sufficiency. She discovered that giving students open doors for reflection and basic thinking in remote dialect learning settings is critical. Ultimately, Chan, Spratt and Humphreys (2010), directed a poll and

meetings to 508 college understudies in Hong Kong Polytechnic University. They directed an exploration on understudies' demeanors toward student independence, and their view of instructors' part in dialect learning process. The consequences of this examination demonstrated that the understudies considered the instructor as more in charge of classroom administration. Furthermore, the substantial dependence on the educator and overwhelming workload were discovered to be obstruction to cultivating student self-sufficiency.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

The research is quantitative in nature which will employ a descriptive approach to explore what students think about learners' autonomy and how it should be promoted by teachers.

Instrumentation

To find the perception of the students the researcher prepared a students' questionnaire in which different questions were asked from the students about learners' autonomy. The researcher also observed teachers and attended their classes in order to check the autonomy of learners in their classrooms that whether the responses of the participants match with the classroom environment or not.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The researcher has used primary data. Primary data means that the data is collected by the researcher and is used for specific purpose in mind. It means that someone collected the data from the original source first hand. In primary data collection the data is collected through questionnaires.

Population and Sampling Procedures

The participants in this research were students of B.S level from English Department of Women University Mardan and BS and MPhil Level of the department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan.

Procedure of data analysis

After collecting the data through close ended questionnaire from the students, the data was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18.0. The reactions of the students were examined and percentages and frequencies were measured. The perception of the students was incorporated and examined thoroughly.

Table 1

I understand the meaning of learners autonomy and my teachers always follow it in classroom					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	9	12.9	13.8	13.8

	Agree	14	20.0	21.5	35.4
	Neutral	17	24.3	26.2	61.5
	Disagree	16	22.9	24.6	86.2
	Strongly Disagree	9	12.9	13.8	100.0
	Total	65	92.9	100.0	
Missing	System	5	7.1		
Total		70	100.0		

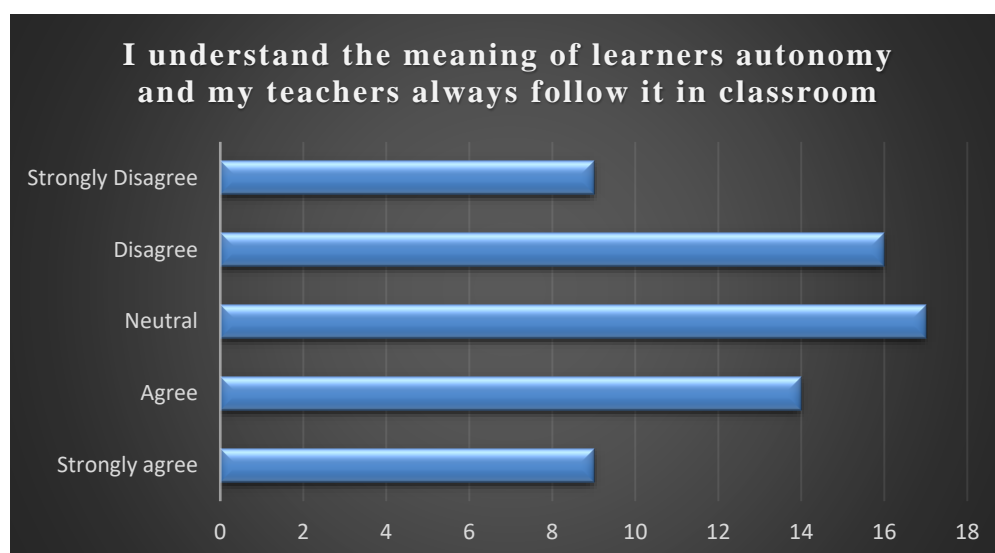


Figure 1

The very first question that was asked through questionnaire from the students of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan and Women University Mardan was whether they know what learners autonomy is and they understand this term and its importance or not. The response of most of the students in both universities was neutral and disagree. Mostly students in Women University Mardan and Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan were unaware of the concept of autonomous learning. In order to ask further questions regarding learners autonomy they were made clear about what independent learning is and how it helps the students inside and outside the classroom.

Table 2

I like the teachers who offer help.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	26	37.1	38.8	38.8
	Agree	34	48.6	50.7	89.6
	Neutral	7	10.0	10.4	100.0
	Disagree	0			
	Strongly disagree	0			
	Total	67	95.7	100.0	
Missing	System	3	4.3		

Total	70	100.0		
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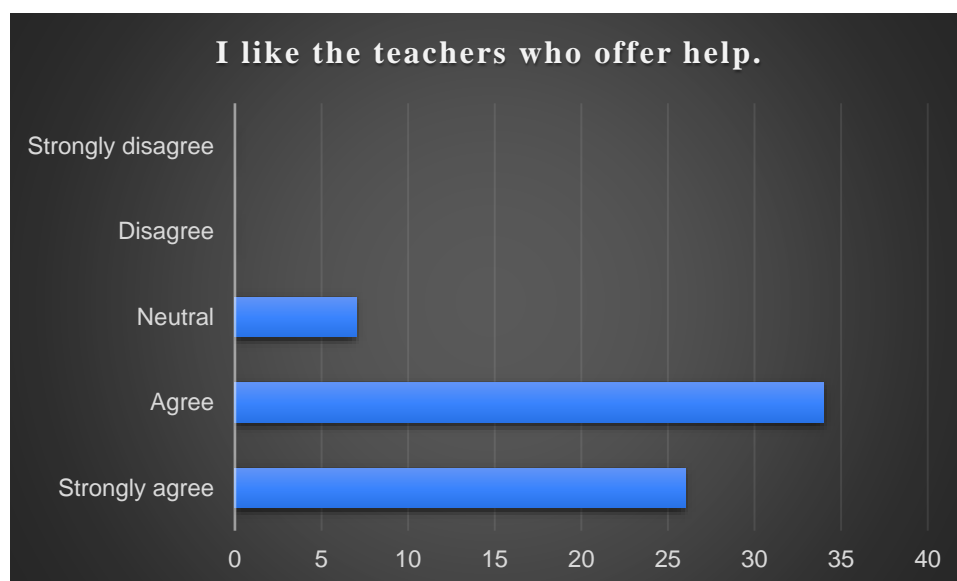


Figure 2

According to figure and table number two mostly teachers and students are not independent learners because they are in favour of taking help from teachers. These students rely on their teachers for help. About 38% students strongly agreed and 50% agreed for taking help from teachers which clearly shows that these students are not autonomous and according to the perception of these students teacher who offer help is more liked by students. This attribute to low level of autonomous learning.

Table 3

I like those teachers who tell me about my weak areas as I am unable to find out my weak areas		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	32	45.7	47.8	47.8
	Agree	23	32.9	34.3	82.1
	Neutral	5	7.1	7.5	89.6
	Disagree	7	10.0	10.4	100.0
	Strongly disagree	0			
	Total	67	95.7	100.0	
Missing	System	3	4.3		
Total		70	100.0		

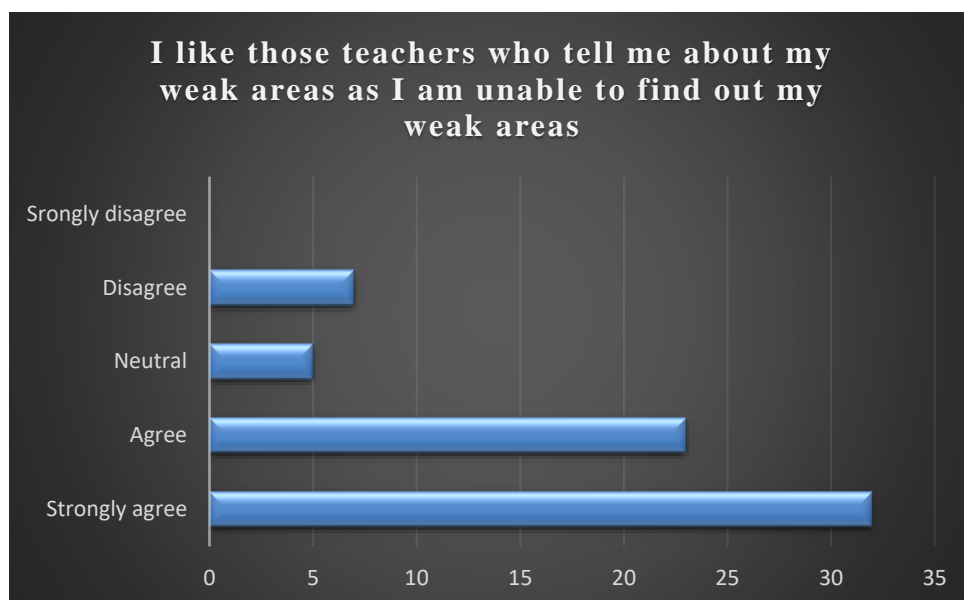


Figure 3

The students agreed to the fact that the teachers who tell the students about their weaknesses are considered as better teachers. It means that the learners find it difficult to identify their own weaknesses and they are unable to recognize their own difficulties regarding learning. They need teachers support to point out their weak areas to them. The researcher discovered that the students find it difficult to assess their own progress. This shows that these students are rather less autonomous or not autonomous at all as about 49% students strongly agree with the statement that they like those teachers who tell them about weak areas which means that these students want external stimulus in order to find out their weak areas. They are not good in self-assessment and self-learning.

Table No. 4

Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they would					
Valid	Strongly agree	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Agree	18	25.7	26.9	26.9
	Neutral	30	42.9	44.8	71.6
	Disagree	10	14.3	14.9	86.6
	Strongly Disagree	5	7.1	7.5	94.0
	Total	4	5.7	6.0	100.0
Missing	System	67	95.7	100.0	
Total		3	4.3		

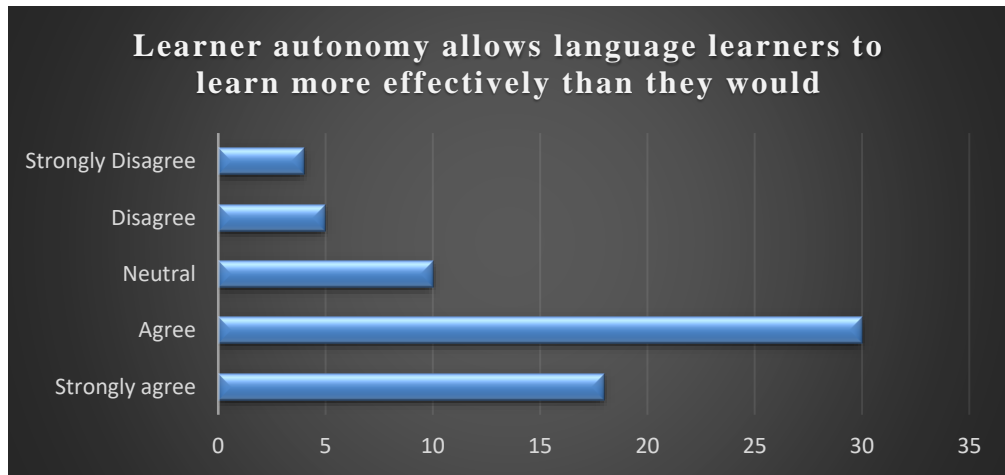


Figure:4

According to question number 8 it was asked from the students that Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they would. It means that if a learner is allowed to learn autonomously by giving him opportunity to make decisions about his learning regarding English language so he becomes more interested and enthusiastic about learning. The result showed that most of the students agreed with the statement that if a student is autonomous he will learn more effectively rather than if a teacher give him instruction about language learning. These students were of view that if the environment of a classroom is autonomy focused and the teacher introduce to the students different activities for learning that are according to the interest and need of students, the learners start taking interest in the classroom and in learning as compared to that environment which is non autonomous and where the students are forced to learn according to the prescribed rules that are set by the teachers. Besides some students disagreed with this statement. They believed that the role of teacher is very much important. A teacher should not allow the students to make decisions about their learning as the classroom environment should be teacher centered not learner centered.

In conclusion the most popular choice of the teachers regarding this statement as shown is agree which means that if a teacher wants a learner to learn more effectively he or she should make the students autonomous regarding learning English language

Table 5

I like those teachers who guide me about how much time should I spend on completing a task i.e. assignment/quiz etc.		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	21	30.0	31.3	31.3
	Agree	30	42.9	44.8	76.1
	Neutral	8	11.4	11.9	88.1
	Disagree	6	8.6	9.0	97.0

	Strongly Disagree	2	2.9	3.0	100.0
	Total	67	95.7	100.0	
Missing	System	3	4.3		
Total		70	100.0		

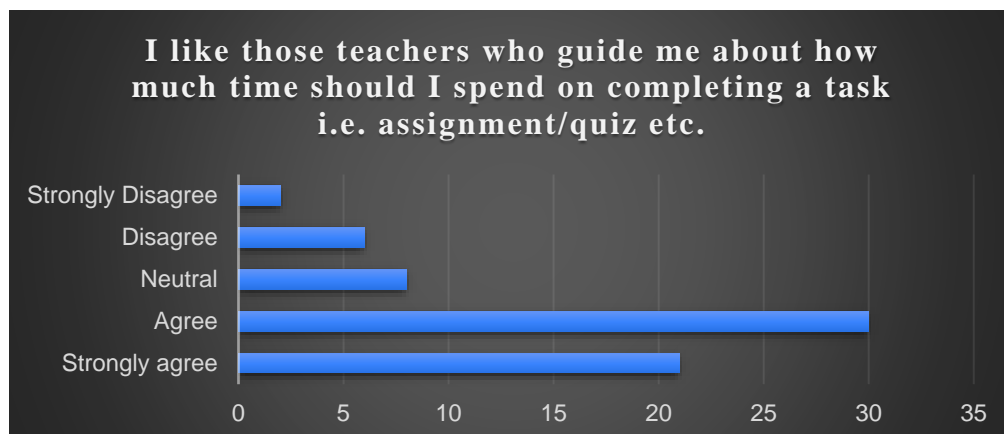


Figure 5

With regards to statement no. 3 the researcher found that most of the students are of the view that they need teachers support, instructions and guidance in every task. In addition, the participants' replies demonstrated that they require not just the teacher's instruction, but also the teacher's specification of the time required to finish the exercise. This demonstrates how dependent students are on their teachers. As a result, they have a relatively low amount of language learning autonomy. The majority of students consider it significant that the instructor directs them throughout the class. This shows that students may have low self-reliance, a language barrier, and a lack of motivation to look for or seek knowledge on their own, resulting in poor autonomous learning abilities.

Table 6

In our classroom the students plan the approach of class room whether that will be learner centered or teacher centered					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	3	4.3	4.6	4.6
	Agree	15	21.4	23.1	27.7
	Neutral	22	31.4	33.8	61.5
	Disagree	14	20.0	21.5	83.1
	Strongly Disagree	11	15.7	16.9	100.0
	Total	65	92.9	100.0	
Missing	System	5	7.1		
Total		70	100.0		

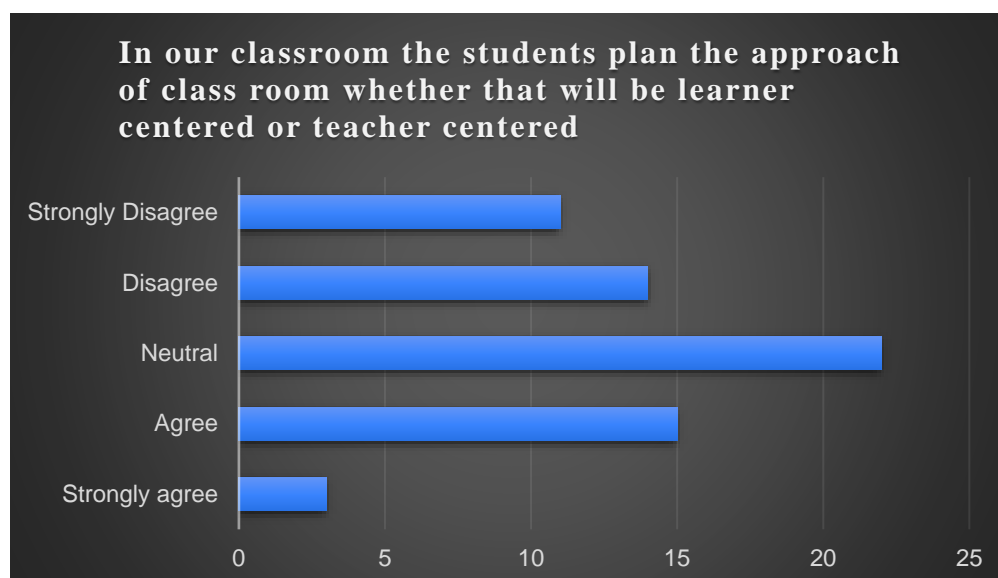


Figure:1

When asked from the students through question no. that who decide the approach of the classroom whether it will be learner centered or teacher centered mostly students of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan responded as agree but students of Women University Mardan responded as strongly as disagree. This means that to some extent students of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan are autonomous. They are given this opportunity to select learning methodology for themselves which is more feasible and understandable for all the students. However response of Women University Mardan students was little disappointed. According to these students classroom environment is not learner centered which shows that the ration of autonomous learning is very low in these classrooms. These students are dependent on their teachers for learning methodology.

Table 2

Talking to the teacher about my progress is embarrassing for me					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	13	18.6	19.4	19.4
	Agree	16	22.9	23.9	43.3
	Neutral	13	18.6	19.4	62.7
	Disagree	18	25.7	26.9	89.6
	Strongly Disagree	7	10.0	10.4	100.0
	Total	67	95.7	100.0	
Missing	System	3	4.3		
Total		70	100.0		

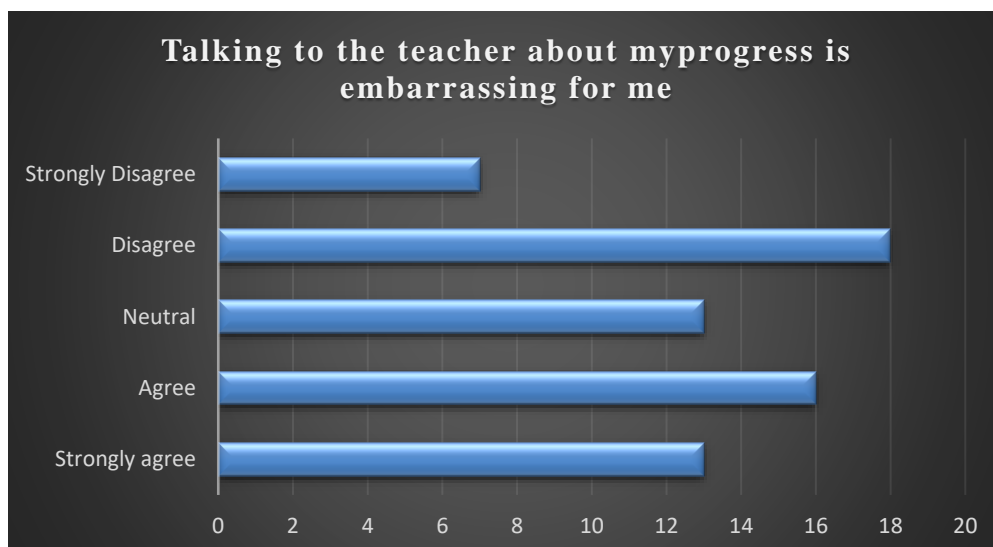


Figure:2

Students identified a barrier to contact with their teacher in response to this question. Many students felt it difficult and uncomfortable to discuss their language performance with their teachers. The majority of students, on the other hand, indicated that they monitor their self-improvement. This suggests that students are willing to take charge of their own progress monitoring. This does not, however, imply that they completely know how to do so. On the other hand, it's reasonable to assume that not all independent learners are comfortable communicating with their teacher about their progress. This communication, on the other hand, is an essential component of effective learning behavior.

Table 3

I need the teacher to tell me how much I am progressing					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	36	51.4	53.7	53.7
	Agree	24	34.3	35.8	89.6
	Neutral	3	4.3	4.5	94.0
	Disagree	1	1.4	1.5	95.5
	Strongly Disagree	3	4.3	4.5	100.0
	Total	67	95.7	100.0	
Missing	System	3	4.3		
Total		70	100.0		

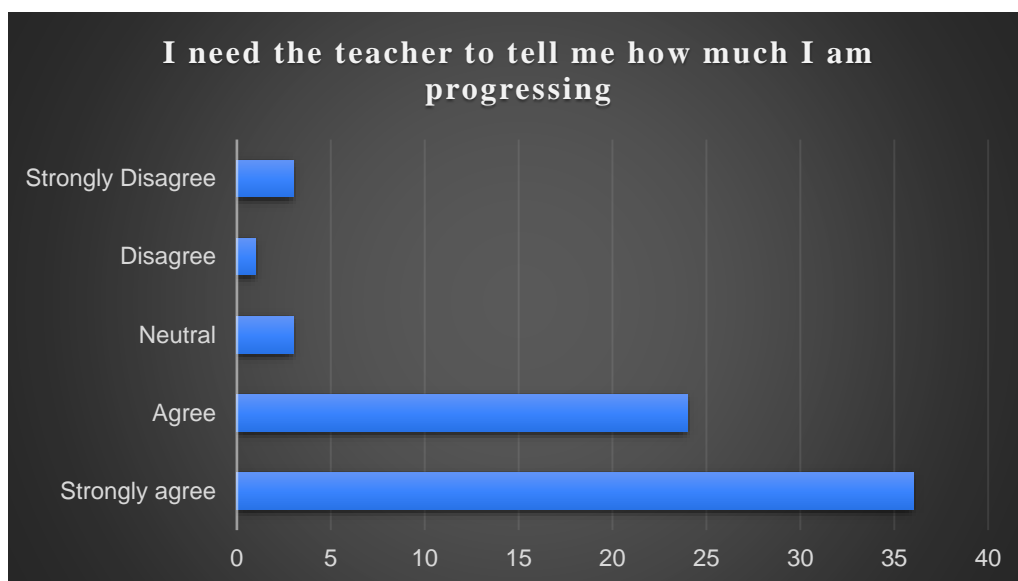


Figure:3

It is obvious from the response of students that majority of the students of both the universities are either agree or strongly agree which shows that these students are not independent learners but they depend on their teachers for feedback. It also shows the importance of feedback that how much these students depend on teachers' feedback. However it has been noticed that very little number of students responded as disagree or strongly disagree which shows that there are some students who are not willing to take feedback from the teachers about their progress.

Table 4

I am trying to learn new strategies for my learning process by myself					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	19	27.1	28.4	28.4
	Agree	33	47.1	49.3	77.6
	Neutral	10	14.3	14.9	92.5
	Disagree	4	5.7	6.0	98.5
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.4	1.5	100.0
	Total	67	95.7	100.0	
Missing	System	3	4.3		
Total		70	100.0		



Figure:4

When asked from the students that whether they learn new strategies regarding by themselves or even in this they want teachers support so there response was that they would prefer to try by themselves for leaning instead of teachers direction if opportunities are provided to them. These students were of the view that in learning process the learner should rely not on the teacher but they like to try new learning methods on their own. The findings show that students at Abdul Wali Khan University and Women University Mardan are willing to embrace learner autonomy as a strategy or idea for language acquisition. The majority of students agreed with the statement, despite the fact that a few individuals objected. This indicates that these students are accepting the duty transfer from teachers to students.

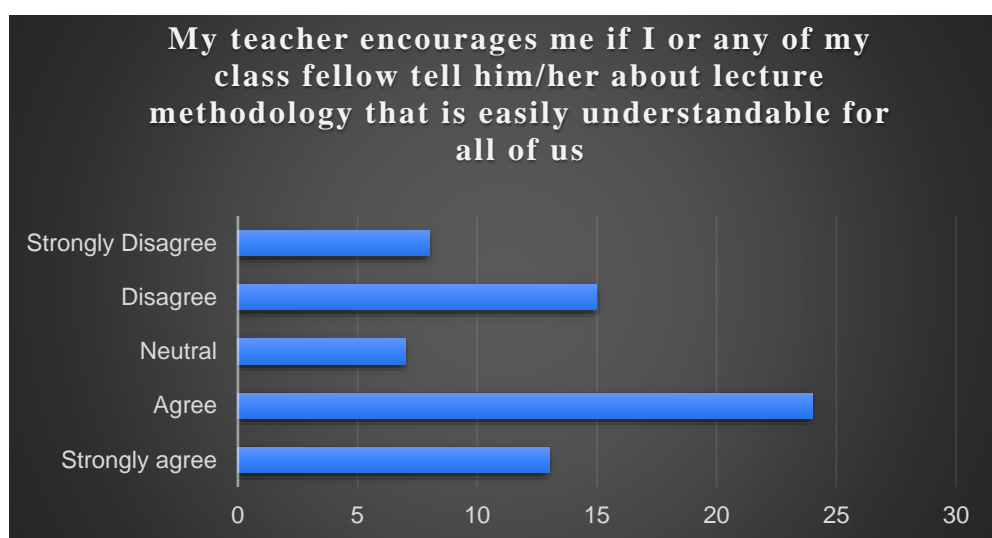


Table 10

My teacher encourages me if I or any of my class fellow tell him/her about lecture methodology that is easily understandable for all of us					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	13	18.6	19.4	19.4
	Agree	24	34.3	35.8	55.2
	Neutral	7	10.0	10.4	65.7
	Disagree	15	21.4	22.4	88.1
	Strongly Disagree	8	11.4	11.9	100.0
	Total	67	95.7	100.0	
Missing	System	3	4.3		
Total		70	100.0		

This was the last and most important question that was asked from the students that if they tell their teachers to apply that learning methodology which is easily understandable for the students so do the teacher agree with it or not. Majority of the students agree with the term but it has been noticed that some of the students did not agree with this statement. There could be two reasons for that. First was that it is a universal truth that in one classroom it is impossible that all the students will be of same intellect. There are brilliant, average and weak students in every class. The methodology that is understandable for brilliant students may not be understandable for weak students but they are not given the opportunity to share their views. The second reason is that as in one classroom all the students are not of same level. Same is the case with teachers in a department. Some of the teachers may encourage it when the students share their understandable way of methodology with the teachers but other teachers may not find it comfortable to give freedom to the students about lecture methodology. That is why there was contrast between the responses of the learners.

DISCUSSION

From the above responses of the students regarding autonomous learning one thing is clear that students of no matter of which university they belong to, but they all are willing to learn autonomously. Though at some points they need teachers' guidance and instructions but they accept independent learning as challenge and as necessary way of achieving their goals. Based on the findings of this study, it is reasonable to conclude that these students still require professional training to grasp how much control they have over their own learning. Furthermore, some students demonstrated willingness for autonomous learning; nonetheless, one of the most significant obstacles is their lack of understanding of the idea. If we look closely at the responses of the students we might deduce that students still think they are extremely reliant on their teachers, which is not a new result. Students highlighted a variety of problematic circumstances, which were reported in this study. Learners also reported that knowing about learner autonomy was one of their

top obstacles as they have no idea about autonomous learning. They said that they are still reliant on the teacher to achieve their learning.

Finally, after examining the data, the researcher concludes that professional instruction is still required for these students to grow as independent language learners. Also, because the idea of student involvement in the learning process is still confusing to them, learners must be aware of it. Finally, this research study is an attempt to contribute to the subject of learner autonomy, which is a relatively new learning concept that requires additional investigation.

CONCLUSION

This research offers key discoveries about learners and their function in the autonomous learning process. Most significantly, it displays learners' opinions as well as the current state of learner autonomy at Women University Mardan and Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, indicating low levels of learner autonomy. These students are so depending on their teachers regarding learners' autonomy that they do not feel it comfortable to learn on their own as autonomous learners. To overcome this weak area first of all the teachers need to make the students aware of what basically autonomy means. How they can become autonomous learners. The government should arrange such trainings for both teachers and students in educational institutes where they can excel their abilities to promote autonomous learning.

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Students' questionnaire

Autonomous Language Learning: Students Perception

Semester: _____

Level

University: _____

BS

Department: _____

M.Phil.

PhD

Below are a number of statements regarding learner autonomy in language learning, also known as independent learning Please read each one and indicate to what extent you (as a student) agree or disagree with each one.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1. I understand the meaning of learners' autonomy and my teachers always follow it in classroom				
2. I like the teachers who offer help.				
3. I like those teachers who tell me about my weak areas as I am unable to find out my weak areas				
4. Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they would.				
5. I like those teachers who guide me about how much time should I spend on completing a task				
6. In our classroom the students plan the approach of class room whether that will be learner centered or teacher centered				
7. Talking to the teacher about my progress is embarrassing for me				
8. I need the teacher to tell me how much I am progressing				
9. I am trying to learn new strategies for my learning process by myself				
10. My teacher encourages me if I or any of my class fellow tell him/her about lecture methodology that is easily understandable for all of us.				