An Assessment of the Intermediate Level EFL Teachers Applied of the Techniques in Autonomy Learning

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Abstract:

Autonomous learner refers to learner independence; self-access learning, self-paced learning and distant learning emphasize a shift of attention to learner-oriented approach to language learning. In this approach, learners take the responsibility of their own learning, learn at their own pace and use their own strategies. "autonomy learning indicates a number of dimensions in which learners move away from dependence on the teacher and take responsibility for their learning and work in partnership with tutors and other students and learn to learn; develop key transferable skills (e.g., study, time-management, interpersonal skills etc; actively manage their learning; seeking out learning opportunities and using appropriate learning strategies ; involve themselves in an interactive process in which they set short and long term learning objectives, reflect on and evaluate progress."

In addition, autonomy for the language learners has been described as a process that enables learners to recognize and assess their own needs, to choose and apply their own learning strategies or styles eventually leading to the effective management of learning".

The present study aims at assessing EFL teachers' at intermediate level employment of the techniques in automatic learning. It hypothesized that EFL teachers at intermediate level don't employ the techniques that are related to autonomy learning. To achieve the aim of the present study a checklist in its final form has been administered twice by observer and co observer.

Results obtained by statistical treatment of data have shown that, EFL teachers do not employ techniques of automatic learning. In the light of results, some recommendations and suggestions have been stated for further studies.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem of the Study and its Significance

Many terms have been coined to refer to a concept to which referred to as autonomy learning. Practically, all these synonymous terms such as learner independence, self-access learning, self-paced learning and distant learning emphasize a shift of attention to learner-oriented approach to language learning. In this approach, learners take the responsibility of their own

learning, learn at their own pace and use their own strategies. "autonomy learning indicates a number of dimensions in which learners move away from dependence on the teacher and take responsibility for their learning and work in partnership with tutors and other students and learn to learn; develop key transferable skills (e.g., study, time-management, interpersonal skills etc; actively manage their learning; seeking out learning opportunities and using appropriate learning strategies ; involve themselves in an interactive process in which they set short and long term learning objectives, reflect on and evaluate progress." In addition, autonomy for the language learners has been described as a process that enables learners to recognize and assess their own needs, to choose and apply their own learning strategies or styles eventually leading to the effective management of learning". It involves risk taking by all concerned. Learner Autonomy is about learning to learn and developing assessment for learning. Students reflect on their experiences and are able to create their own meanings and challenge ideas/theories. It requires tutors to trust students' abilities and to promote the use of student-directed learning. The problem is that almost all instructors of different levels don't have the ability, the experience, or the qualification to take that role.

1.2 The Aim

The present study aims at assessing EFL teachers' at intermediate level employment of the techniques in automatic learning.

1.3 The Hypothesis

The study hypothesized that EFL teachers at intermediate level don't employ the techniques that are related to autonomy learning.

1.4 Limits

The present study is limited to:

1- The academic year (2013-2014).

2- EFL teachers at 1st intermediate level in the first Alkarkh Directorate General of Education.

1.5 The Procedures

The following procedures are adopted to achieve the aim of the study:

1- An observation checklist is constructed by the researcher to assess autonomy learning.

2- A sample of the study is randomly selected.

3- The checklist is applied through classroom observation in order to identify the techniques employed by EFL teachers at intermediate level in autonomy learning.

4- Validity and reliability of the checklist are computed.

5- Results are presented by using suitable statistical devices.

6- Conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions are put forward.

1.6 Definition of Basic Terms

1- Assessment

Assessment in education refers to the process by which one attempts to measure the quality and quantity of learning and teaching by using various testing techniques, e.g. assignments, projects, continuous assessment, objective-type tests, final examination, and standardized tests (Page, 1980:26).

The operational definition of assessment is one aspect of evaluation which is a necessary part of the whole teaching and learning processes.

2- Technique

Technique is an instructional procedure designed to relate students to material being presented in order to facilitate learning (Good, 1973:591).

The operational definition of technique is the teacher's procedure, way, practice, behavior, strategy and activity used inside the classroom to accomplish a desired aim.

3- Autonomous:

Acting independently or having the freedom to do so (oxford, 2006).

The Operational definition autonomous refers to self-learning.

CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION

2.1 Autonomy Learning Approach

The concept of autonomy language learning has been central since 1981 when Henri Holec wrote *Autonomy and foreign language learning* .He began by defining learner autonomy as the "ability to take charge of one's own learning", noting that this ability "is not inborn but must be acquired either by 'natural' means or (as most often happens) by formal learning, i.e. in a systematic, deliberate way", and pointing out that "*To take charge of one's learning* is to have the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning (Holec, 1981:3).

Learner autonomy, in other words, belongs together with the idea that one of the functions of (adult) education is to equip learners to play an active role in participatory democracy. The development of the language learner, which by implication includes the development of learning skills, and the development of the capacity for independent language learning.
Autonomous learners draw on their intrinsic motivation when they accept responsibility for their own learning and commit themselves to develop the skills of reflective self-management in learning; and success in their learning. Precisely because autonomous learners are motivated and reflective learners, their learning is efficient and effective (conversely, all learning is likely to succeed to the extent that the learner is autonomous). And the efficiency and effectiveness of the autonomous learner means that the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom can be applied to situations that arise outside the classroom.

 Autonomous learners are those who explicitly accept responsibility for their own learning (Little, 1991:29). The autonomous learner shows initiative regarding learning, and shares in monitoring progress and evaluating the extent to which learning is achieved (Schunk, 2005:130). Fostering the development of learner autonomy rests on the pedagogical claim that in formal educational contexts, reflectivity and self-awareness produce better learning (Pintrich, 2000:80). Autonomous learners willingly partner with faculty and peers in learning, and are reflective about their own learning. Autonomous learners are provoked to learn and evidence life-long learning. The term stems from self-regulated or self-directed learning. (Benson and Voller, 1997: 48) defined leaner autonomy as the ability to take personal or "self regulated" responsibility for learning and it is widely theorized to predict academic performance (Salisbury et al.,

2001:97). It is also theorized that student achievement motivation expectancies regarding academic confidence, achievement goals, and learning strategies forecasts learner autonomy (Eccles & Roeser, 2003:98). For example, it is unlikely a student with poor academic confidence would easily become an autonomous learner.

2.2 The Principles of Autonomous Language Learning

Thanasoulas, (2000:125) writes that learner autonomy entails reflective involvement in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating learning. But note that language learning depends crucially on language use, we can learn to speak only by speaking, to read only by reading, and so on. Thus in formal language learning, the scope of learner autonomy is always constrained by what the learner can do in the target language; in other words, the scope of our autonomy as language learners is partly a function of the scope of our autonomy as target language users. According to (Schunk, 2005:134) the development of autonomy in language learning is governed by three basic pedagogical principles:

1- **learner involvement:** engaging learners to share responsibility for the learning process (the affective and the metacognitive dimensions);

2- **learner reflection:** helping learners to think critically when they plan, monitor and evaluate their learning (the metacognitive dimensions);

3- **appropriate target language use** – using the target language as the principal medium of language learning (the communicative and the metacognitive dimensions).

2.3   The Role of The Teacher in The Autonomous Language Learning Classroom

The role teacher of autonomous learning approach can be explained in the following points:

1- use the target language as the preferred medium of classroom communication and require the same of his/her learners;

2- involve his/her learners in a non-stop quest for good learning activities, which are shared, discussed, analyzed and evaluated with the whole class – in the target language, to begin within very simple terms;

4- help his/her learners to set their own learning targets and choose their own learning activities, subjecting them to discussion, analysis and evaluation – again, in the target language;

5- require his/her learners to identify individual goals but pursue them through collaborative work in small groups;

6- require his/her learners to keep a written record of their learning – plans of lessons and projects, lists of useful vocabulary, whatever texts they themselves produce;

7- engage his/her learners in regular evaluation of their progress as individual learners and as a class – in the target language.

2.4 The Role of the Learner in the Autonomous Language Learning Classroom

To all intents and purposes, the autonomous learner takes a (pro-) active role in the learning process, generating ideas and availing himself of learning opportunities, rather than simply reacting to various stimuli of the teacher (Kohonen, 1992:95). As we shall see, this line of reasoning operates within, and is congruent with, the theory of constructivism. For Rathbone (1971:100), the autonomous learner is a self-activated maker of meaning, an active agent in his own learning process. He is not one to whom things merely happen; he is the one who, by his own volition, causes things to happen. Learning is seen as the result of his own self-initiated interaction with the world.

Within such a conception, learning is not simply a matter of rote memorisation; 'it is a constructive process that involves actively seeking meaning from (or even imposing meaning on) events' (Candy, 1991: 271).

Such "inventories" of characteristics evinced by the putative autonomous learner abound, and some would say that they amount to nothing more than a romantic ideal which does not square with reality. This stands to reason, for most of the characteristics imputed to the "autonomous learner" encapsulate a wide range of attributes not commonly associated with learners. For instance, (Candy, 1991: 102) likens the autonomous learner to one whose life has a consistency that derives from a coherent set of beliefs, values, and principles and who engages in a still-continuing process of criticism and re-evaluation', while (Ibid: 102) regards the autonomous learner as someone who 'is obedient to a law that he prescribes to himself'.

Within the context of education, though, there seem to be seven main attributes characterizing autonomous learners (Omaggio, 1978: 41-42):

1. Autonomous learners have insights into their learning styles and strategies;
2. take an active approach to the learning task at hand;
3. are willing to take risks, i.e., to communicate in the target language at all costs;
4. are good guessers;
5. attend to form as well as to content, that is, place importance on accuracy as well as appropriacy;
6. develop the target language into a separate reference system and are willing to revise and reject hypotheses and rules that do not apply and,
7. have a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language.

2.5   The Environment of Autonomous Language Learning

The concern of the present study has so far been with outlining the general characteristics of autonomy. At this juncture, it should be reiterated that autonomy is not an article of faith, a product readymade for use or merely a personal quality or trait. Rather, it should be clarified that autonomous learning is achieved when certain conditions obtain: cognitive and metacognitive strategies on the part of the learner, motivation, attitudes, and knowledge about language learning, i.e., a kind of metalanguage. To acknowledge, however, that learners have to follow certain paths to attain autonomy is tantamount to asserting that there has to be a teacher on whom it will be incumbent to show the way. In other words, autonomous learning is by no means "teacherless learning." As Sheerin (Benson & Voller, 1997: 63) succinctly puts it, teachers…have a crucial role to play in launching learners into self-access and in lending them a regular helping hand to stay afloat.

Probably, giving students a "helping hand" may put paid to learner autonomy, and this is mainly because teachers are ill-prepared or reluctant to 'wean students away from teacher dependence' (Benson & Voller, 1997: 63). After all, 'it is not easy for teachers to change their role from purveyor of information to counsellor and manager of learning resources. And it is not easy for teachers to let learners solve problems for themselves' (Gathercole, 1990: 11). Such a transition

from teacher-control to learner-control is fraught with difficulties but it is mainly in relation to the former (no matter how unpalatable this may sound) that the latter finds its expression. At any rate, learner-control—which is ancillary to autonomy—'is not a single, unitary concept, but rather a continuum along which various instructional situations may be placed' (Ibid:12). It is to these 'instructional situations' that we will turn in the next section. In this section, it is of utmost importance to gain insights into the strategies learners use in grappling with the object of enquiry, i.e., the target language, as well as their motivation and attitude towards language learning in general.

CHAPTER THREE

PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 An Introductory Note

The following chapter presents a detailed description of the procedures followed in order to achieve the aim of the present study.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study consist of (763) Iraqi EFL intermediate school teachers at Baghdad province/first Al-karkh Directorate General for Education. The sample includes (50) male and female 1st class intermediate school teachers for academic year 2014-2015. They represent 10% of total number of the population (see table).

D. G.	1st		2nd		3rd		Total
1st Al-karkh	M	F	M	F	M	F	763
Total	50	210	48	207	48	200	

3.3 Description of the Checklist

In order to achieve the aim of the present study, a checklist is constructed based on related literature. The procedure conducted in the present study is scientific and systematic recorded observation. A checklist is provided using systematic procedures for obtaining and recording the assessment of observers. It consists of listing of steps, activities, or behaviors that the observer records when the observation occurs. The checklist enables the

observer to note whether or not a trait or a characteristic is presented. By using a rating scale, the observer would be able to indicate the status or quality of what is being related (Gronlund, 1976:445, Thorndike and Hagen, 1977:486; and Sheal, 1989:97).

The checklist includes (12) items in its final form. The items belongs to (Habash and Metsky 2006) classification of the automatic learning domains.

3.4 Face Validity

Validity is the first aspect to be checked when constructing any type of testing. It refers to "the extent to which an assessment measures what it is supposed to be measured". Instrument validity is a reflection how well it measures what it is designed to measure (Bergam, 1981:150).

Face validity is the best type of validity in case of self-rating (Nunnally, 1972:353). It is secured if the list of items appears to measure what is intended to be measured (Ebel, 1972:78).

Accordingly, the checklist is exposed to (7) experts in the field of ELT and literatures to decide its face validity (see table). The validity of the items of checklist is found out by using the percentage of agreement, where the items are proved to be valid by (100%) of agreement .

College	Name	Academic Rank	
College of Education Ibn Rush\Baghdad University PH.D. in ELT	Al-Rifai, Fatin Khairi	Professor	1
College of Education Ibn Rush\Baghdad University PH.D. in ELT	Saed, Muayyad Mohammed	Assistant Professor	2
College of Education Ibn Rush\Baghdad University PH.D. in Literature	Al-Khafaji, Saad	Assistant Professor	3
College of Languages\Baghadad University PH.D. ELT	Al-zubaidi, Ali Arif	Instructor	4
Ministry of Education PH.D in ELT	Heijel, Mansour Kadhim	Instructor	5
College of Media\Al-Iraqia University M.A. in ELT	Mahdi, Ahmad Abd Al-Wahab	Instructor	6

3.5 Reliability of the Checklist

Reliability is one of the necessary characteristics of any good test. It refers to consistency of measurement which makes validity possible and indicates the amount of confidence that can be placed in the results of a test

(Oller,1979:4). "It is the actual level of the agreement between the results of one test with itself" (Davies, et.al., 1999:168).

A sample of (50) EFL intermediate school teachers who are randomly selected from 1st Al-Karkh Directorate General of Education, were observed by the researchers and a co-observer. Data obtained by the researchers are correlated to that obtained by the co-observer through using Pearson correlation coefficient. This is called inter-scorer reliability. The computed reliability coefficient value is found out to be (926.80) which is considered to be acceptable since it is above the tabulated value(3809) under level of significance (0,05) with degree of freedom (28) (Mehrens and Lehmann, 1991:113).

3.6 Final Administration of the Checklist

The period from 3rd March to 5th May/2014 is devoted to the final administration of the checklist and the observation visit to different intermediate schools in 1st Al-karkh Directorate General of Education. As the sample of teachers of the present study inter their classroom, the researcher starts observing and recording their teaching behaviors and activities in automatic learning. The time allotted to each teacher is (30) minutes.

3.7 Scoring Scheme

The scoring scheme adopted in the present study depends on rating scale of five points: always(4), often(3), sometimes(2), rarely(1), and never(0).

3.8 Statistical Methods

1- Pearson Correlation Coefficient

It is used to compute reliability of checklist

$$r= \frac{N\Sigma XY - (\Sigma X)(\Sigma Y)}{\sqrt{\left[N\Sigma X^2 - (\Sigma X)^2\right]\left[N\Sigma Y^2 - (\Sigma Y)^2\right]}}$$

X= the first set of scores.

Y= the second set of scores.

N= number of sample.   (Downie & Heath, 1983:99)

2- The Weighted Mean

It is used to compute the frequency of occurrence of each item.

w.m= $\dfrac{A1 \times F1 + A2 \times F2 + \cdots + A50 \times F50}{total\ frequency}$ (Isaac & Michael, 1977:50)

3- The Percentile Weight

p.w= $\dfrac{Weighted\ mean}{higher\ alternative} \times 100$ (Ibid)

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1 results related to the aim and verification of the null hypothesis

In order to assess the EFL teachers' employment of techniques in automatic learning, a checklist has been administered to the sample of the study as illustrated in chapter three. The checklist includes (12) items of techniques employed by EFL intermediate school teachers in automatic learning. Therefore weighted mean and weighted percentile for each item of the checklist has been calculated as shown in the table (4).

Rank order	Std. deviation	Weighted percentile	Weighted mean	N Items
1	18.55	%36.5	0.73	1
2	0.71	%31.5	0.63	2
3	35.05	%48	0.96	3
4	0.67	%28	0.56	4
5	0.6	%33	0.66	5
6	0	%100	2	6
7	0.77	%56.5	1.13	7
8	0.74	%79	3.16	8
9	0	%100	2	9
10	0.76	%28	0.56	10
11	0.75	%60	1.2	11
12	0.52	%31.5	0.63	12

4.2 Discussion of Results

It proves that the null hypothesis that, EFL teachers do not employ techniques of automatic learning.

4.3 Conclusions

The main point of departure for this study has been the notion that there are degrees of learner autonomy and that it is not an absolute concept. It would be nothing short of ludicrous to assert that learners come into the learning situation with the knowledge and skills to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning, or to make decisions on content or objectives. Nevertheless, learner autonomy is an ideal, so to speak, that can, and should, be realized, if we want self-sufficient learners capable of evaluating every single situation they find themselves in and drawing the line at any inconsistencies or shortcomings in institutions. Certainly, though, autonomous learning is not akin to "unbridled learning." There has to be a teacher who will adapt resources, materials, and methods to the learners' needs and even abandon all this if it need to be. Learner autonomy consists in becoming aware of, and identifying, one's strategies, needs, and goals as a learner, and having the opportunity to reconsider and refashion approaches and procedures for optimal learning. But even if learner autonomy is amenable to educational interventions, it should be recognized that it 'takes a long time to develop, and--simply removing the barriers to a person's ability to think and behave in certain ways may not allow him or her to break away from old habits or old ways of thinking'. knowledge lies everywhere to hand for those who observe and think'

4.4 Recommendations

From the presented study we can make some recommendations for the further studies in the field of automatic language learning:

1- Techniques in automatic learning approach can be used to teach language for English language students and students of other levels.

2- It can be used as a training course in the institutions and companies.

3- It can be used to teach language for students from their basic level until their more advanced one.

4.5 Suggestions

1- The study is needed to assess the remedial automatic language learning approach at college stages.

2- The study is needed to find the effect of the remedial automatic learning approach on the development of language skills at all studying levels.

<u>Appendix I</u>

The Final Form of the Checklist

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Items
					Listening
					Students are exposed to recorded listening practice twice then they suggest title for the topic and they express what the listening practice is talking about. After that they ask the teacher about new or unknown words they heard.
					They are practicing pronunciation through listening to words teacher writes on the board, then they suggest the phonological system for these words and the place of sound stress.
					Speaking
					Teacher suggests topics related to students' textbook subjects and ask them to make conversations or stories out of these topics.
					Teacher asks students to bring objects they choose in order to talk about them.
					Reading
					Students are given the opportunity to choose how to practice reading skill and work as a whole class to read their reading passages, they can get teacher help for better pronunciation.
					Teacher suggest students to choose topic from stories, newspapers, magazine, etc in order to read.
					Writing
					topics are suggested by teacher or by students themselves to write composition out of these topics.
					Teacher ask students to make

						portfolio, journals, or researches about what they have during their learning course.
						Structure
						Students as groups have the opportunity to discuss the grammatical structure for grammar focus exercises before they starter to solve them.
						Correction
						Students have direct correction for their mistakes either by other students or by the teacher.
						Testing
						After practicing each skill, students work in pairs or as groups to construct test and score for each others.
						Assessment
						Students use direct, indirect, or metacognitive self- and peer-assessment to evaluate their performance.

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تقييم تطبيق مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية في المرحلة المتوسطة للاساليب في التعلم الذاتي

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الملخص:

المتعلم المستقل يشير الى استقلالية المتعلم. تنفيذ التعلم الذاتي، زيادة في التعلم والتعلم عن بعد يأكد تحول الانتباه على طريقة المتعلم في تعلم اللغة. في هذا الطريقة، المتعلمين يتحملون مسؤولية تعلمهم، وتعلم في بيئتها واستخدام استراتيجيات خاصة بها. "التعلم الذاتي يشير إلى وجود عدد من المسائل التي على المتعلمين الابتعاد عنها من ضمنها الاعتماد على المعلم وتحمل مسؤولية تعلمهم والعمل في شراكة مع المعلمين والطلاب الآخرين، تعلم كيفية التعلم؛ تطوير مهارات قابلة للنقل رئيسية (على سبيل المثال، دراسة، إدارة الوقت، ومهارات التعامل مع الآخرين وما إلى ذلك؛ إدارة نشاط التعلم والبحث عن فرص التعلم واستخدام استراتيجيات التعلم المناسبة؛ ادخالها في عملية التفاعلية التي تحدد أهداف التعلم على المدى القصير والطويل، وتعكس على تقييم التقدم المحرز ".

بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فقد وصف التعلم الذاتي لمتعلمين اللغة بوصفها العملية التي تمكن المتعلمين من إدراك وتقييم احتياجاتهم الخاصة، لاختيار وتطبيق استراتيجيات وأنماط التعلم الخاصة بهم مما يؤدي في النهاية إلى الإدارة الفعالة للتعلم ".

وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم معلمين اللغة الانكليزية 'في المرحلة المتوسطة في توظيف تقنيات التعلم الذاتي. اذ افترض أن معلمين اللغة الانكليزية في المرحلة المتوسطة لا يوظفون التقنيات التي ترتبط بالتعلم الذاتي. لتحقيق الهدف من هذه الدراسة تم عرض الاستمارة في شكلها النهائي مرتين على المراقب والمراقب المساعد. وقد أظهرت النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها عن طريق الإحصائيات البيانية ان معلمين اللغة الانكليزية لا يوظفون تقنيات التعلم التلقائي. في ضوء النتائج، وقد تم ذكر بعض التوصيات والمقترحات لمزيد من الدراسات.