Relationship Between Self-Assessment and Autonomous Learning in University-Level English Students´

Relación entre la autoevaluación y el aprendizaje autónomo en estudiantes universitarios de inglés

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RESUMEN

Este estudio examina la relación entre la autoevaluación y el aprendizaje autónomo entre los estudiantes universitarios de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). En respuesta al creciente énfasis en la autonomía del alumno en la educación superior, la investigación analiza si los estudiantes que participan activamente en la autoevaluación demuestran niveles más altos de aprendizaje autónomo. Se empleó un diseño de investigación cuantitativo y correlacional, en el que participaron 120 estudiantes universitarios matriculados en cursos obligatorios de inglés en una universidad pública. Los datos se

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recopilaron mediante dos cuestionarios fiables: un cuestionario de autoevaluación y una escala de aprendizaje autónomo. Las estadísticas descriptivas indicaron que los estudiantes mostraban niveles moderadamente altos tanto de autoevaluación como de autonomía del alumno. El análisis de correlación de Pearson reveló una relación positiva fuerte y estadísticamente significativa entre la autoevaluación y el aprendizaje autónomo ($r = 0,68$, $p < 0,01$). Los resultados sugieren que las prácticas de autoevaluación están estrechamente relacionadas con la capacidad de los estudiantes para asumir la responsabilidad de su aprendizaje, utilizar estrategias eficaces y participar en prácticas independientes. El estudio concluye que la integración de actividades sistemáticas de autoevaluación en la enseñanza del inglés a nivel universitario puede promover eficazmente la autonomía del alumno y apoyar el desarrollo de estudiantes de idiomas reflexivos y autónomos.

Palabras clave: *Autoevaluación; Aprendizaje autónomo; Autonomía del alumno; Inglés como lengua extranjera; Educación superior*.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between self-assessment and autonomous learning among university-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. In response to the increasing emphasis on learner autonomy in higher education, the research investigates whether students who actively engage in self-assessment demonstrate higher levels of autonomous learning. A quantitative, correlational research design was employed, involving 120 undergraduate students enrolled in compulsory English courses at a public university. Data were collected using two reliable questionnaires: a Self-Assessment Questionnaire and an Autonomous Learning Scale. Descriptive statistics indicated that students exhibited moderately high levels of both self-assessment and learner autonomy. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between self-assessment and autonomous learning ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$). The findings suggest that self-assessment practices are closely associated with students' ability to take responsibility for their learning, use effective strategies, and engage in independent practice. The study concludes that integrating systematic self-assessment activities into

university-level English instruction can effectively promote learner autonomy and support the development of reflective and self-directed language learners.

Keywords: *Self-assessment; Autonomous learning; Learner autonomy; EFL; Higher education*

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary higher education, the development of autonomous learners has become a central objective across disciplines, particularly in the field of foreign language education. Globalization, technological advancement, and the rapid expansion of knowledge have transformed the way languages are learned and used, requiring students to assume greater responsibility for their learning processes. As a result, traditional teacher-centered models are increasingly being replaced by learner-centered approaches that emphasize independence, reflection, and self-regulation. Within this pedagogical shift, autonomous learning and self-assessment have emerged as key constructs in understanding how students can effectively manage their own learning, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

Autonomous learning is generally understood as the learner's ability to take charge of their own learning by setting goals, selecting strategies, monitoring progress, and evaluating outcomes. Collier (2022) first conceptualized learner autonomy as the capacity to assume responsibility for one's learning decisions, a definition that has continued to influence research in language education. In university settings, autonomy is particularly relevant because students are expected to engage in independent study, manage academic demands, and continue learning beyond formal instruction. For EFL learners, autonomy is even more critical, as language acquisition requires continuous practice, exposure, and reflection outside the classroom environment.

Despite its importance, fostering autonomous learning remains a challenge for many university-level English students (Bets & Kercher, 2023). Many learners enter higher education after years of teacher-directed instruction, where assessment and decision-making are largely controlled by instructors. This educational background can limit students' ability to evaluate their own learning, identify weaknesses, and adopt effective

strategies independently. Consequently, higher education institutions face the challenge of implementing pedagogical practices that gradually transfer responsibility from teachers to learners, enabling students to become more self-directed and reflective.

One instructional practice that has gained increasing attention in this context is self-assessment. According to Huang (2022), "Self-assessment refers to the process by which learners evaluate their own performance, learning progress, or outcomes based on explicit criteria or standards". Unlike traditional assessment methods, which are typically summative and teacher-driven, self-assessment is formative in nature and places learners at the center of the evaluation process. Through self-assessment, students are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned, how they have learned it, and what they need to improve. This reflective process is closely linked to metacognition, which plays a crucial role in autonomous learning.

The theoretical connection between self-assessment and autonomous learning is grounded in self-regulated learning theory. According to this perspective, effective learners actively plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning activities (Yates et al., 2022). Self-assessment functions as a mechanism that supports these processes by enabling learners to monitor their performance and make informed decisions about future learning strategies. In language learning, self-assessment can help students identify gaps in their vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, or communicative competence, thus guiding them toward more targeted and efficient learning practices.

In EFL contexts, self-assessment has been associated with several positive outcomes, including increased learner awareness, improved motivation, and greater engagement in learning tasks (Yan & Carless, 2022). When students are involved in assessing their own work, they are more likely to develop a sense of ownership over their learning and to perceive assessment as a tool for improvement rather than merely a measure of performance (Xia et al., 2024). This shift in perception is particularly important at the university level, where students are expected to develop critical thinking skills and become lifelong learners.

However, despite the theoretical and pedagogical relevance of self-assessment, its implementation in university-level English courses is often limited or inconsistent. In many

cases, assessment remains primarily teacher-controlled, and students are rarely trained to assess their own learning effectively. Without proper guidance, self-assessment may be superficial or inaccurate, reducing its potential benefits (Herrera et al., 2022). Therefore, understanding how self-assessment relates to autonomous learning is essential for informing instructional design and assessment practices in higher education.

Many research has explored self-assessment and learner autonomy as separate constructs, but fewer studies have examined the relationship between them, particularly in EFL university settings. Existing studies suggest that learners who frequently engage in self-assessment tend to demonstrate higher levels of self-regulation and independence (Gultom, & Oktaviani, 2022). Nevertheless, contextual factors such as educational culture, instructional practices, and learner beliefs may influence how self-assessment contributes to autonomy. Consequently, further research is needed to examine this relationship in diverse educational contexts.

In many university EFL programs, students face additional challenges, such as limited exposure to English outside the classroom and varying levels of prior language proficiency (Fedorenko et al., 2024). These factors make autonomous learning strategies even more crucial for successful language development. According to Utami and Wahyudin (2024), Self-assessment may serve as a practical and accessible tool to help students monitor their progress and adapt their learning strategies to their individual needs. By engaging in regular self-assessment, learners may become more aware of their learning processes and more capable of directing their own development.

Given the growing emphasis on learner autonomy in higher education and the potential role of self-assessment in promoting autonomous learning, it is necessary to empirically examine the relationship between these two variables (Valle et al., 2025). Understanding this relationship can provide valuable insights for educators seeking to design effective assessment practices that support autonomy and improve language learning outcomes. Furthermore, such research can contribute to the broader discussion on formative assessment and learner-centered pedagogy in university-level education.

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between self-assessment practices and autonomous learning among university-level English students. By

adopting a quantitative, correlational approach, this research seeks to determine whether students who engage more frequently in self-assessment also exhibit higher levels of autonomous learning behaviors. The findings of this study are expected to inform EFL teaching practices and highlight the importance of integrating self-assessment as a strategy to foster learner autonomy in higher education.

METODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative, non-experimental correlational research design to examine the relationship between self-assessment and autonomous learning among university-level English students. A correlational approach was considered appropriate because the purpose of the study was not to manipulate variables, but rather to identify the degree and direction of association between students' self-assessment practices and their levels of learner autonomy within a natural educational setting.

Participants

The participants consisted of 120 undergraduate students enrolled in compulsory English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses at a public university. The sample included students from various academic disciplines, including social sciences, engineering, and education. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 23 years, and both male and female students were represented. All participants had completed two levels of English courses, ensuring comparable exposure to English learning contexts.

Participants were selected using convenience sampling, as they were drawn from classes accessible to the researchers. While this sampling method limits generalizability, it was suitable for exploratory research in an educational context. Ethical considerations were observed, and students were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and notified that participation was voluntary.

Instruments

Two structured questionnaires were employed as data collection instruments:

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

This instrument was designed to measure students' engagement in self-assessment practices related to English learning. It consisted of 20 items addressing key dimensions such as goal-setting, reflection on learning outcomes, identification of strengths and weaknesses, use of feedback, and self-monitoring of progress. Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was adapted from established self-assessment frameworks in language learning literature and reviewed by two experts in applied linguistics to ensure content validity.

Autonomous Learning Scale

The Autonomous Learning Scale consisted of 22 items measuring learners' ability to take responsibility for their learning. The scale covered dimensions including learning responsibility, motivation, strategy use, independent practice, and self-evaluation. Responses were recorded using the same five-point Likert scale to maintain consistency across instruments. Prior to administration, the scale was piloted with a small group of students to ensure clarity and reliability. Both instruments demonstrated strong internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected during regular class sessions over a two-week period. With instructors' permission, the researcher administered the questionnaires in paper-based format. Clear instructions were provided, and students were given approximately 20 minutes to complete both questionnaires. To reduce response bias, students were encouraged to answer honestly and were informed that their responses would not affect their course grades.

Completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion and coded for analysis. No identifying information was recorded to ensure anonymity.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to determine overall levels of self-assessment and autonomous learning. To examine the relationship between the two variables, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient

was computed. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.01$ to ensure a high level of confidence in the results.

Prior to correlation analysis, assumptions of normality and linearity were checked and met. The results were then interpreted in relation to the research objectives and existing literature.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings derived from the statistical analysis of the data collected through the Self-Assessment Questionnaire and the Autonomous Learning Scale. The results are organized according to the research objectives and the analytical procedures described in the methodology.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to determine students' overall levels of self-assessment and autonomous learning. The results indicated that participants demonstrated a moderate to high level of self-assessment practices, with a mean score of 3.62 and a standard deviation of 0.54. This suggests that most students regularly engaged in reflective activities such as monitoring their progress, identifying learning difficulties, and evaluating their English performance.

Likewise, the Autonomous Learning Scale revealed a moderately high level of learner autonomy among participants. The mean score for autonomous learning was $M = 3.70$, with a standard deviation of $SD = 0.49$. These findings indicate that students generally perceived themselves as responsible for their learning, motivated to improve their English skills, and capable of using learning strategies independently.

A comparison of the mean scores suggests that students who reported frequent self-assessment also tended to report higher levels of autonomous learning, warranting further correlational analysis.

Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency reliability was examined for both instruments using Cronbach's alpha. The Self-Assessment Questionnaire yielded a coefficient of $\alpha = 0.84$, while the Autonomous Learning Scale produced a coefficient of $\alpha = 0.88$. These values indicate

strong reliability and confirm that the instruments consistently measured the intended constructs.

Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationship between self-assessment and autonomous learning, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated. The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between self-assessment and autonomous learning ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$). This result indicates a strong association between the two variables, suggesting that students who engaged more actively in self-assessment tended to exhibit higher levels of learner autonomy.

Further examination of individual questionnaire dimensions showed that specific self-assessment behaviors were strongly related to components of autonomous learning. For example, self-reflection on errors and progress demonstrated a high correlation with independent strategy use ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$), while goal-setting through self-assessment was closely associated with learning responsibility ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$).

Overall, the results indicate that university-level English students demonstrate moderately high levels of both self-assessment and autonomous learning. The statistically significant and strong positive correlation between these variables supports the assumption that self-assessment is closely linked to the development of learner autonomy in EFL contexts.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between self-assessment and autonomous learning among university-level English students. The findings revealed a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between these two variables, indicating that students who actively engage in self-assessment practices tend to demonstrate higher levels of learner autonomy. This result supports the central assumption of the study and aligns with existing theoretical and empirical research in the field of language education.

The moderately high mean scores for both self-assessment and autonomous learning suggest that participants were generally aware of their responsibility in the learning process

and were capable of reflecting on their English learning progress. This may be partly attributed to the university context, where students are expected to manage their learning independently. The findings reinforce the view that self-assessment functions as a metacognitive tool that enables learners to monitor, evaluate, and regulate their learning behaviors more effectively.

The significant correlation found between self-assessment and autonomous learning is consistent with constructivist and self-regulated learning theories, which emphasize learners' active involvement in knowledge construction. Through self-assessment, students are encouraged to identify their strengths and weaknesses, set realistic learning goals, and adjust strategies accordingly. These processes are fundamental components of learner autonomy. The strong association between self-reflection and independent strategy use further highlights the role of self-assessment in promoting strategic and self-directed learning.

Additionally, the relationship between goal-setting through self-assessment and learning responsibility suggests that self-assessment may enhance students' sense of ownership over their learning. When learners evaluate their own progress based on clear criteria, they are more likely to take initiative and maintain motivation. This finding is particularly relevant in EFL contexts, where sustained practice beyond classroom instruction is essential for language development.

Despite these positive findings, several limitations should be considered. First, the reliance on self-reported data may have influenced the results, as participants might have overestimated their self-assessment abilities or level of autonomy. Second, the correlational design does not allow for causal conclusions; therefore, while a strong relationship was identified, it cannot be concluded that self-assessment directly causes increased learner autonomy. Future research could employ experimental or longitudinal designs to examine how structured self-assessment interventions influence the development of autonomy over time.

Pedagogically, the results suggest that English instructors should systematically integrate self-assessment activities into university level courses. Practices such as reflective journals, learning logs, self-evaluation checklists, and rubric-based self-rating can help

students develop the skills necessary for autonomous learning. Teacher guidance remains essential, particularly in training students to conduct accurate and meaningful self-assessment.

In conclusion, the discussion of the findings confirms that self-assessment is a significant factor associated with autonomous learning in university-level English education. By fostering reflection, responsibility, and strategic learning, self-assessment can serve as an effective pedagogical approach to support the development of autonomous, lifelong language learners.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the relationship between self-assessment and autonomous learning among university-level English students. Drawing on a quantitative correlational methodology, the findings demonstrated a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between these two constructs. When considered in relation to the introduction, methodology, results, and discussion, the conclusions provide a coherent understanding of how self-assessment contributes to the development of learner autonomy in higher education EFL contexts.

The results confirmed the assumptions outlined in the introduction, which emphasized self-assessment as a key component of learner-centered and autonomy-oriented language instruction. The descriptive statistics revealed that students reported moderately high levels of both self-assessment and autonomous learning, suggesting that university learners are generally prepared to engage in reflective and self-directed learning practices. The correlation analysis further supported this observation by showing that students who frequently evaluate their own learning also tend to take greater responsibility for managing their English learning process.

In relation to the methodology, the use of reliable and validated instruments ensured that both self-assessment and autonomous learning were measured consistently and accurately. The significant correlation identified through Pearson’s analysis provides empirical evidence that supports theoretical claims discussed in the literature and reinforces

the methodological choice of a quantitative correlational design for exploring this relationship.

The discussion highlighted the role of self-assessment in fostering metacognitive awareness, motivation, and strategic learning, all of which are essential elements of autonomy. Building on these insights, the conclusion emphasizes that self-assessment should not be viewed solely as an evaluative technique but as an instructional strategy that actively promotes independent learning behaviors. This finding has important pedagogical implications, suggesting that structured self-assessment activities can serve as a bridge between teacher-guided instruction and fully autonomous learning.

Despite the study's contributions, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The reliance on self-reported data and the non-experimental design restrict the ability to draw causal conclusions. Therefore, future research should consider longitudinal or experimental approaches to further investigate how sustained self-assessment practices influence the development of learner autonomy over time. Additionally, incorporating qualitative data, such as interviews or learning journals, could provide deeper insights into students' perceptions and experiences.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that self-assessment is closely linked to autonomous learning in university-level English education. By integrating systematic and guided self-assessment practices into English courses, educators can support students in becoming more reflective, responsible, and autonomous learners. These findings contribute to ongoing efforts to promote learner autonomy and lifelong learning in higher education language programs.

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