

THE INTERPLAY OF LEARNER AUTONOMY AND INTERACTION AMONG EFL STUDENTS AT AN INDONESIAN ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Learner autonomy and classroom interaction are essential components of successful EFL learning. This study investigated autonomy and interaction among 67 English department students at Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kerinci of Indonesia, employing a quantitative design with a 42-item Likert-scale questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential analyses revealed high levels of autonomy and interaction across learner–learner, learner–teacher, and learner–content dimensions. A one-way ANOVA further indicated significant differences in interaction outcomes among groups with varying levels of autonomy. The findings suggest that teachers can promote autonomy and interaction through guided discussions, project-based learning, and peer feedback, while encouraging students to take greater responsibility for their learning. Providing students with choices in topics and learning methods can further enhance motivation and ownership. At the institutional level, policies and programs that support self-directed learning and meaningful classroom interaction are essential to ensure relevance to students’ needs in culturally specific contexts. This study is limited by its small sample size, single institutional setting, and reliance on questionnaire-based data. Future studies with larger and more diverse samples, integrating qualitative methods, are recommended to enrich understanding. Despite these limitations, the study contributes valuable insights by showing that Islamic university EFL students demonstrate high levels of autonomy and interaction, contrasting earlier findings in the Indonesian context.

Keywords: *EFL, Islamic Higher Education, Learner Autonomy, Learner Interaction*

Introduction

Learner autonomy and interaction are widely regarded as essential components of effective English language learning. Learner autonomy involves learners' capacity to manage their own learning through setting goals, planning strategies, monitoring their progress, and reflecting, in line with principles of self-regulated learning (Schiller & Dorner, 2021). It fosters ownership, enhances learners' drive and confidence, which are crucial for sustained language development in EFL contexts. (Ismail et al., 2023). According to Ahmed & Hossain (2024), nurturing learner autonomy enhances self-efficacy and persistence in language learning. Meanwhile, interaction continues to be recognized as central to language learning by offering authentic communication, corrective feedback, and negotiation of meaning, as supported by recent task-based interaction research (Tien, 2022; Gao et al., 2024). While autonomy and interaction have often been studied separately, recent studies highlight their correlation. Specifically, Putistina et al. (2019) found that interactive classroom activities significantly foster learner autonomy and self-beliefs.

Based on the EF English Proficiency Index (2024), Indonesia is still categorized as a low-proficiency country, ranking 80th out of 113 countries. Contributing factors include low motivation and learning anxiety (Maruf et al., 2020), native language interference, limited phonological awareness, and inadequate pronunciation instruction (Kosasih, 2021). Despite years of English education, the EPI has declined since 2011 (Wayan & Adnyani, 2022), although English use is increasingly common and serves as a secondary and instructional language in some contexts (Alrajafi, 2021). Learner autonomy, encompassing involvement, freedom of choice, responsibility, critical thinking, and metacognition, along with interaction, is known to positively influence student achievement (Anca, 2023; Swatevacharkul, 2021). Autonomy fosters self-regulated learning, creativity, self-esteem, and the ability to engage in complex learning tasks (Kashefian-Naeeini & Kouhpeyma, 2020; Marantika, 2021), while interaction enhances social connectedness, participation, and cognitive skill development (Miao & Ma, 2022; Katsarou & Chatzipanagiotou, 2021). Effective

interaction strategies, such as peer collaboration, multilingual practices, and empathetic teacher–student relationships, further improve engagement and classroom comfort (Sato & Ballinger, 2016; Badie & Dep, 2020; Dao, 2020; Gan, 2021; Muhammad & Idris, 2022), yet many blended EFL classes in universities remain lecturer-centered (Nusong & Watanapokakul, 2025).

Globally, numerous studies have examined learner autonomy, often linking it to related factors such as motivation, metacognition, and interactive learning environments to show its contribution to EFL success (Iamudom & Tangkiengsirisin, 2020; Oussou et al., 2024; Saeed, 2021; Son & Hai, 2023; Swatevacharkul, 2021; Tuan, 2021; Van Nguyen, 2020; Zhang, 2021). In contrast, research in the Indonesian university context is limited and fragmented (Daflizar, 2021; Daflizar & Petraki, 2022; Melvina & Julia, 2021; Melvina et al., 2021; Nurfiqah, 2020; Yosintha & Yunianti, 2021), focusing mainly on measuring autonomy levels, exploring perceived benefits, or identifying sociocultural challenges such as reliance on teacher-centered traditions. Local findings reveal that although students recognize autonomy’s benefits for responsibility and motivation (Maulana & Singh, 2023), its implementation is constrained by institutional and cultural factors, with many learners showing only moderate autonomy and dependence on teachers (Melvina et al., 2021). The present study investigated how learner autonomy and interaction interrelate in EFL learning, an aspect that has been relatively underexplored in Indonesian higher education.

Recent studies have also highlighted the critical role of learner interaction in enhancing engagement and learning outcomes. Three primary types of interaction, learner-learner, learner-teacher, and learner-content are commonly identified (Razali et al., 2020; Martin & Bolliger, 2018). Factors such as social presence significantly impact these interactions in online EFL courses, mediating learning outcomes (Bailey, 2022). Additionally, student-technology and student-teacher interactions are strong predictors of satisfaction in online learning environments (Amoush & Mizher, 2023). Contextual factors shape interactional behaviors, as shown by differences between EFL and ESL settings (Sato & Storch, 2022). Teacher feedback and guidance also play

crucial roles in promoting student engagement, especially in online writing courses for pre-service English teachers (Mafulah et al., 2023; Harjanto et al., 2022).

While numerous research has examined learner autonomy and interaction, these topics are often studied independently. Few studies investigate how learner autonomy and interaction are connected, particularly within the context of Islamic institutions in Indonesia, where social and cultural norms may influence learning behaviors. This study sought to address this gap by examining the connection between learner autonomy and different types of interactions – namely learner-learner, learner-teacher, and learner-content – among Indonesian tertiary EFL students in an Islamic institution. Thus, this research aimed: 1) to describe the characteristics of learner autonomy in English language learning among Indonesian tertiary EFL students; 2) to assess the degree to which Indonesian tertiary EFL students engage in learner-learner, learner-teacher, learner-content, and overall interactions; and 3) to examine whether overall interaction differ significantly across different levels of learner autonomy.

Method

This study obtained data on learner autonomy and interaction in learning English within the population of Indonesian EFL students at an Islamic University by utilizing a descriptive quantitative design with a survey approach. This design was chosen to systematically describe the characteristics of students' autonomy and interactions by gathering direct responses through a structured questionnaire (Mackiewicz, 2018). Quantitative research is characterized by its emphasis on measurable data, allowing for the quantification of attitudes, opinions, and behaviors (Marojahan, 2020). This method allows researchers to collect measurable data, analyze patterns statistically, and understand how students' autonomy and interactions in the English language learning context influenced their learning experiences and outcomes.

As for the participants, this research used purposive sampling technique involving 67 from the English Study Program at Institut Islam Negeri Kerinci. The participants were male and female students from the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters,

ranging in age from 17 to 22 years old. They had considered English through formal education for around 10 years. Therefore, participants were expected to have sufficient understanding of English to provide a more extensive picture of their autonomy and interaction during their English learning experience.

For data collection, this study used a questionnaire initially formulated by Chan et al. (2002) and subsequently modified by Treesattayanmune & Baharudin (2024), comprising 42 questions rated on a five-point Likert scale from strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (5). The first section included a description of the study's objective, including a confidentiality assurance regarding participants' data and responses. The second section collected demographic data of the participants, such as age, gender, length of formal English learning experience, and their proficiency in English. The third and fourth sections assessed students' perspectives on 23 questions related to learner autonomy, which covered students' perceived ability and responsibility to regulate their learning, and 19 questions related to learner interactions, which included learner-learner, learner-teacher, and learner-content interactions.

This study obtained its data through a survey designed with Google Forms. The Google Forms link was distributed with students through social media platforms such as WhatsApp. Students were instructed to complete the questionnaire independently based on their own experiences and perspectives. The collected data were then downloaded and processed for analysis purposes. Descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted through SPSS to the collected data. It allowed researchers to conduct in-depth statistical analysis, and systematic statistical analysis of data obtained from questionnaires. This process enabled the researchers to identify the characteristics of learner autonomy, measure the level of student interaction (whether interaction between peers, with lecturers, or with learning materials), and discover out whether there are noteworthy contrasts in in general interaction in relation to the level of learner independence.

The results of this examination given a deeper insight into how learner autonomy is connected to interaction in English learning among Indonesian EFL

students at an Islamic institution. Mean scores and SD were conducted to describe students' learner autonomy and interaction. ANOVA was conducted to examine whether variations in learner autonomy levels corresponded to significant differences in students' interaction scores in learning English language.

Results

With regard to Research Question 1: "What are the characteristics of learner autonomy in English language learning among Indonesian tertiary EFL students?", the analysis began with the calculation of students' learner autonomy scores using descriptive statistics. The interpretation of the results followed a five-level categorization of mean scores: very low (1.00–1.80), low (1.81–2.60), moderate (2.61–3.40), high (3.41–4.20), and very high (4.21–5.00) (Treesattayanmune & Baharudin, 2024).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Autonomy and Interaction

No	Learner Autonomy Subscales	Mean Scores	Standard Deviations	Level
1.	Abilities	3.64	.68	High
2.	Responsibilities	3.58	.55	High
	Overall	3.61	.57	High

Table 1 presents the levels of learner autonomy among the students. The table indicates that the overall mean score for learner autonomy was 3.61, which falls into the high category. The table also shows that two dimensions learner autonomy - abilities and responsibilities - where also in the high category, 3.64 and 3.58 respectively.

Table 2. Distribution of Student Responses to Learner Autonomy Questionnaire Statements

No	Item	Mean	SD	Level
Abilities				
1.	Setting my own learning objectives inside the class	3.72	0.91	High
2.	Setting my own learning objectives outside the class	3.84	0.85	High

	for assigned tasks, activities, or homework			
3.	Selecting appropriate learning techniques for carrying out classroom learning activities	3.66	0.93	High
4.	Selecting suitable learning methods for carrying out learning activities outside the class when working on assigned tasks, activities, or homework	3.54	0.93	High
5.	Deciding how long to spend on individual learning activity	3.58	1.09	High
6.	Evaluating whether my learning is effective or not	3.75	0.86	High
7.	Evaluating the effectiveness of the course I take	3.61	1.04	High
8.	Monitoring my learning progress during lessons	3.67	0.93	High
9.	Monitoring my learning progress outside the class	3.40	0.95	Moderate
Responsibilities				
1.	Defining my learning objectives is my responsibility.	4.00	1.03	High
2.	Defining my learning objectives is my teacher's responsibility.	3.28	1.11	Moderate
3.	Monitoring my learning progress throughout lessons is my responsibility.	3.94	0.89	High
4.	Monitor my learning progress throughout lessons is my teacher's responsibility.	3.51	1.05	High
5.	Monitoring my learning progress outside the class is my responsibility.	3.85	1.00	High
6.	Monitoring my learning progress outside the class is my teacher's responsibility.	2.99	1.05	Moderate

7.	Selecting activities or methods for learning English is my responsibility.	3.88	1.04	High
8.	Selecting activities or methods for learning English is my teacher's responsibility.	3.45	0.94	High
9.	Deciding how much time to allocate on individual activity is my responsibility.	3.82	1.06	High
10.	Deciding how much time to allocate on individual activity is my teacher's responsibility.	3.10	1.02	Moderate
11.	Evaluating whether my learning is effective or not is my responsibility.	3.87	0.90	High
12.	Evaluating whether my learning is effective or not is my teacher's responsibility.	3.48	0.93	High
13.	Evaluating how effective the course I take is my responsibility.	3.76	0.96	High
14.	Evaluating how effective the course I take is my teacher's responsibility.	3.24	1.09	Moderate

Table 2 displays students' responses to each item of the learner autonomy questionnaire. Concerning students' autonomous learner abilities, settings their own out-of-class learning objectives was perceived as the highest of what they were capable of doing, with a mean score of 3.84 and SD of 0.85. This is followed by reviewing their own learning, with a mean score of 3.75 and SD of 0.86 and establishing their personal learning objectives inside the class (M=3.72, SD=0.91). In contrast, two aspects the students believed they could perform the least were choosing appropriate learning techniques for performing learning activities beyond the classroom (M=3.54, SD=0.93), and monitoring their learning progress beyond the (M=3.40, SD=0.95). Regarding students' responsibilities for their learning, the top three perspectives they accepted they were responsible included setting their learning

goals (M=4.00, SD=1.03), monitoring their learning development during lessons (M=3.94, SD=0.89), and selecting activities or techniques to utilize for learning English (M=3.88, SD=1.04).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Interaction

No	Interaction Dimensions	Mean Scores	Standard Deviations	Level
1.	Learner-learner	3.79	.65	High
2.	Learner-teacher	3.70	.69	High
3.	Learner-content	3.68	.80	High
	Overall	3.74	.65	High

Table 3 displays the levels of interaction. The findings indicated that the mean score for overall interaction 3.74, suggesting that students' overall interaction was categorized as high. The table also indicates a high level of interaction in terms of learner-learner, learner-teacher, and learner-content interaction.

Table 4. Distribution of Student Responses across Interaction Scale Items

No	Item	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	Level
Learner-learner interaction				
1.	From my experience, I had many interactions with my classmates concerning course contents.	3.66	0.80	High
2.	From my experience, my classmates commented on my ideas.	3,67	0.88	High
3.	From my experience, I commented on my classmates' ideas.	3.64	0.93	High
4.	From my experience, I engaged in discussions with my classmates about course contents during class.	3.79	0.90	High
5.	From my experience, I responded to the questions asked by my classmates during class.	3.82	0.90	High

6.	From my experience, I asked questions to my classmates during class.	3.90	0.82	High
7.	From my experience, I exchanged ideas with my classmates during class about lectures and how they could be applied.	3.69	0.92	High
8.	From my experience, group activities during class facilitated interaction with my classmates.	3.90	0.97	High
9.	From my experience, proper class activities encouraged more interactions with my classmates.	4.07	0.88	High
Learner-instructor interaction				
1.	From my experience, I had many interactions with teachers during class	3.67	0.80	High
2.	From my experience, I asked teachers questions during class.	3.55	0.89	High
3.	From my experience, teachers provided immediate responses to my questions.	3.82	0.90	High
4.	From my experience, teachers frequently asked questions to students to facilitate discussion.	3.61	0.90	High
5.	From my experience, I answered questions posed by my teacher.	3.66	0.79	High
6.	From my experience, I received enough feedback from teachers when I needed it.	3.91	0.81	High
Learner-content interaction				
1.	From my experience, course materials facilitated	3.79	0.86	High

	my understanding of class contents.			
2.	From my experience, course materials increased my interest in courses.	3.49	1.03	High
3.	From my experience, course materials facilitated linking my personal experience with new concepts or knowledge.	3.73	0.96	High
4.	From my experience, it was easy for me to access course materials.	3.72	0.95	High

Table 4 displays the responses from students regarding each item in the interaction questionnaire. Regarding learner-learner interaction, the top three aspects rated the highest by the students included appropriate class activities ($M=4.07$, $SD=0.88$), asking classmates questions during class ($M=3.90$, $SD=0.82$), and group activities during class ($M=3.90$, $SD=0.97$). However, they perceived that commenting on their classmates' ideas was the peer interaction activity they participated in the least ($M=3.64$, $SD=0.93$). As for learner-teacher interaction, the top two activities that students rated the highest were receiving enough feedback from teachers ($M=3.91$, $SD=0.81$) and replying to students question immediately ($M=3.82$, $SD=0.90$). In contrast, the students believed the activity they did the least was asking question to the teachers during class ($M=3.55$, $SD=0.89$). Regarding learner-content interaction, the students recognized that the usefulness of the course materials in enhancing their comprehension of class ($M=3.79$, $SD=0.86$) was the highest aspect. On the contrary, the students believed the components of the course materials designed to engage their interest assisted them in interacting with the content effectively. ($M=3.49$, $SD=1.03$).

To answer Research Question 3: "Are there significant differences of students' overall interaction based on varying levels of learner autonomy?", the students were grouped into three categories according to their learner autonomy scale scores.

Table 5. Students' Interaction Based on Learner Autonomy Levels

Learner Autonomy Level	N	Learner-Learner		Learner-Teacher		Learner-Content		Overall Interaction	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Low	2	2.06	.55	2.75	.82	2.00	.35	2.27	.58
Moderate	25	3.50	.50	3.37	.46	3.37	.71	3.41	.48
High	40	4.06	.60	3.96	.62	3.96	.69	4.00	.57

Table 5 presents the student distribution across the three learner autonomy levels along with the descriptive statistics related to their interaction. The table indicates that those in the low autonomy group obtained the smallest mean value (M=2.27, SD=.58) meanwhile, those in the high autonomy group obtained the highest mean (M=4.00, SD=.57).

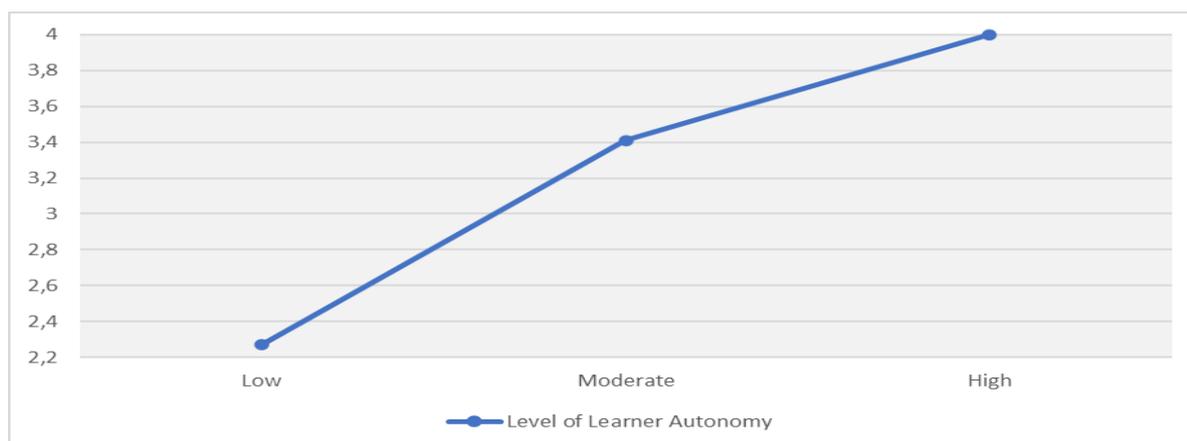


Figure 1. Plot of Mean Scores across Three Different Groups

Table 6. The One-Way ANOVA Results of the Overall Interaction based on Overall Interaction

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	18.17	2	9.09	58.77	.000
Within Groups	9.90	64	.16		
Total	28.07	66			

* $p < .05$

The study used a one-way ANOVA to identify any significant differences in interaction outcomes among groups with different learner autonomy levels. Table 6 displays the outcome of the one-way ANOVA analysis regarding students' overall

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interaction based on their learner autonomy level. The analysis revealed that interaction scores differed significantly among at least two of the three student groups with differing levels of autonomy ($F = 58.77, p < .05$).

Table 7. Post-Hoc Tukey Test Results: Comparison of Overall Interaction across Different Levels of Learner Autonomy

		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	Moderate	-1.01*	.29	.00	-1.71	-.30
	High	-1.98*	.28	.00	-2.67	-1.30
Moderate	Low	-1.01*	.29	.00	.30	1.71
	High	-.98*	.11	.00	-1.24	-.72
High	Low	-1.98*	.28	.00	1.30	2.67
	Moderate	-.98*	.11	.00	.72	1.24

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

To identify which pairs of means showed significant differences, post-hoc Tukey analyses were performed with the outcomes presented in Table 7. The findings indicated that students with low levels of learner autonomy scored significantly lower on interaction compared to those with moderate or high autonomy, while the mean scores of students with moderate and high autonomy did not differ significantly.

Discussion

The analysis found that the students maintained a high level of autonomy in their learning. Students had a high level of independent learning ability and responsibility for learning, especially in setting their own learning objectives, monitoring their progress during lessons, and selecting appropriate techniques for learning English independently, as reflected in the overall high mean scores in Table 1 and detailed responses in Table 2. However, a considerable number of students also considered their teachers to be accountable for specific facets in the learning process, such as monitoring their learning, evaluating its effectiveness, and choosing appropriate techniques, which is also evident in several items within the responsibility section of Table 2. This research contrasts with previous researches in Indonesian.

According to Daflizar (2021) and Melvina et al. (2021), the level of autonomy in learning among Indonesian EFL students was still at a low to moderate level. Daflizar (2021) found that students' comprehension of the concept of learner autonomy was still limited, while Melvina et al. (2021) stated that students only showed moderate levels of learning autonomy. In contrast, this research revealed that students maintained a high level of independent learning, especially in setting learning goals independently, monitoring their learning progress during lessons, and selecting appropriate techniques for learning English independently, as seen in the highest-rated items in Table 2. However, they still faced challenges in monitoring their learning progress outside the classroom, which was indicated by one of the lowest mean scores within the abilities domain in Table 2. This difficulty may be attributed to the lack of structured guidance for independent learning outside the classroom, or students' unfamiliarity with effective self-monitoring strategies.

With regard to learner interaction, this research found that students demonstrated a high level of interaction in three primary aspects: learner-learner, learner-teacher, and learner-content interactions, as shown in Table 3, where all three domains were rated as high. In the learner-learner interaction, the most prominent factor was appropriate class activities, which received the highest mean score among peer interaction items in Table 4. In the learner-teacher interaction, the most supportive factor was receiving sufficient feedback from the teacher. In the learner-content interaction, the most dominant factor was the usefulness of the subject matter in helping students understand class content, as reflected in the highest-rated item within that domain in Table 4. Meanwhile, the lowest aspect in interaction was related to the course content, indicating that the course materials were less effective in stimulating students' interest to interact with the course material. This research contrasted with the findings of Meida & Fadhly (2018), indicating that student interaction in Indonesian EFL university classrooms was still limited, as classroom discourse was predominantly teacher-centered and student-initiated interaction remained minimal. These findings suggested that, despite the significant improvement in classroom interaction, additional scholarly attention remained necessary to optimize

students' engagement with instructional materials, particularly in terms of learner-content interaction.

Further analysis showed that students who exhibited higher level of learner autonomy tended to be more active in interacting with friends, lecturers, and learning materials, as reflected in the results shown in Table 5, which indicated that students in the high-autonomy group scored highest across all interaction domains. On the other hand, students with low learner autonomy tended to be more passive and less involved in discussions. This was also supported by the significant differences in interaction based on autonomy levels, as shown in the ANOVA results in Table 6 and the Post-Hoc analysis in Table 7. This was consistent with previous research conducted in Thailand by (Treesattayanmune & Baharudin, 2024). In this study, students excelled in setting learning goals outside the classroom, indicating that they had the awareness and skills to direct their own learning. This was in line with study a performed in Vietnam by Tuan (2021), which stated that most students perceived learning autonomy as helpful in learning better by engaging in activities outside the classroom and adopting appropriate learning methods. However, even though they felt independent learning was beneficial, monitoring learning progress outside the classroom was still a challenge for them. Furthermore, students showed high awareness in setting their own learning goals, which confirmed that they felt they had control over their learning. This study's findings diverged from those observed in research carried out in Vietnam by Quoc (2020), which stated that some participants might have found studying the material independently boring. However, the findings of this study also indicated that they tended to hand over the responsibility for monitoring learning progress outside the classroom to the teacher. This section was in line with research conducted by Quoc (2020), which stated the students might have had a tendency to depend on their teacher to provide them with new material in each lesson. These findings underscored the interconnectedness of learner autonomy and meaningful classroom engagement.

Furthermore, students demonstrated the highest level of group activities in class, indicating that collaboration with peers was one of the main learning strategies.

This was supported by Table 4, where group activities and appropriate class activities received among the highest mean scores in the learner-learner interaction section. However, interaction through discussions about course content was still less than optimal. This showed that although students were active in group activities, they might have focused more on the task than on discussing the material in depth. Then, students felt they got the greatest benefit from the feedback given by the teacher, which showed the important role of the teacher in improving their understanding. This was in line with research by Gan (2021), which stated that learner-teacher relationships and involvement had a substantial influence on students' proficiency in English.

However, the aspect of asking the teacher during class showed the lowest score, which meant that students might have still needed guidance to increase their confidence in asking questions to the teacher. To improve classroom interactions, teachers needed to create positive relationships with students, taking into account factors such as expectations, beliefs, and personality Gan (2021). Students also assessed that the materials had helped them understand the class content, which indicated that the open materials used were quite effective in supporting the learning process, as reflected in the highest-rated item of the learner-content section in Table 4. In contrast, a study conducted in Malaysia in the setting of online learning Saadiah & Wahid (2020), showed that among learner-to-learner, learner-to-teacher, and learner-to-content, learner-teacher played the most important role in maintaining student engagement in class. However, some students had lower interest in the learning material, which could have indicated that some of the material was less interesting or less relevant to their interests.

The analysis further confirmed that students characterized by a high level of independence were more active in interacting with friends, teachers, and learning materials. This pattern was clearly illustrated in Table 5, which showed that students in the high-autonomy group obtained the highest scores across all three interaction domains. On the other hand, students with low autonomy tended to be more passive, less involved in discussions, and rarely asked questions to the teacher. In line with <https://doi.org/10.35905/inspiring.v8i2.14048>

study performed in Vietnam by Chi et al. (2023), the teacher's role as moderator, evaluator, and co-learner had a significant influence on the progress of student autonomy, both within and beyond the classroom. These outcomes also confirmed that autonomy played an important role in increasing student involvement in learning. Students who were more independent tended to have greater initiative to seek understanding through interaction.

From these findings, strategies that encouraged independent learning, such as discussion-based assignments, interactive learning, and independent reflection, were needed so that students participated more actively and increased their understanding of learning. This was further supported by Table 6, which presented the ANOVA test results indicating significant variations in interaction levels based on students' learner autonomy. More specifically, Table 7 showed through the Post-Hoc Tukey test that students with high autonomy levels were significantly more engaged in classroom interaction compared to their peers with lower autonomy levels. This relationship was also visually represented in Figure 1, where a clear upward trend was observed in interaction scores across increasing levels of autonomy.

These results also indicated that this study presented a new contribution by revealing that students in Islamic institutional settings, often assumed to be socially restrictive, were still able to maintain high levels of interaction in English learning, as shown in Table 3. The findings showed that interaction could flourish as long as it aligned with the values upheld by the institution. This challenged common assumptions that such environments limited student engagement and highlighted the importance of implementing teaching strategies that were appropriate for the specific characteristics of the learning environment.

Conclusion

The results demonstrated that students at the Islamic institution had a strong sense of independent learning, especially in creating their own learning objectives, tracking progress during lessons, and choosing suitable techniques. However, some still relied on teachers for certain aspects, and monitoring progress outside the

classroom remained the weakest area. Students also showed strong engagement in learner–learner, learner–teacher, and learner–content interactions, with group work and timely teacher feedback being key strengths. Those with higher autonomy were more active in conversations, collaboration, and feedback use, showing that autonomy supports proactive classroom involvement.

These findings have several implications. EFL teachers can enhance autonomy and interaction by using guided discussions, project-based learning, and peer feedback, as well as encouraging students to ask more questions and engage in deeper discussions. Additionally, students should be provided with greater opportunities to make decisions about their learning, such as choosing topics or methods that interest them, to increase motivation and responsibility. Institutions can support this by providing policies and programs that promote self-directed learning and meaningful interaction, ensuring that learning activities remain relevant to students' needs even within culturally specific contexts.

There are several limitations to this research that need to be noted. This research used a small scale involving only 67 English language students from an Islamic institution in Indonesia. Therefore, the results may have limited generalizability to a broader population. Additionally, as the study relied solely on questionnaire-based data collection, the depth of information obtained was restricted and lacked further qualitative exploration. Using different data collection techniques such as interviews, diaries, and FGDs can provide a more comprehensive picture. This research was also conducted only at an Islamic institution. The results may not be generalizable to other research institutions with different academic environments. Future research should use larger samples from multiple institutions in order to enhance the overall representativeness of the research. Despite these limitations, this study provides a valuable contribution by contrasting previous findings in the Indonesian EFL context, which generally reported low to moderate levels of learner autonomy and limited student interaction. Contrary to those studies, this research found that students in Islamic institutional settings demonstrated high levels of both autonomy and interaction. This not only challenges prevailing assumptions but also aligns with <https://doi.org/10.35905/inspiring.v8i2.14048>

findings from international research, thus offering new insights into how autonomy and interaction can be fostered in learning environments that uphold Islamic teachings and values.

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