

A Survey Study on English Learning Autonomy of Non-English Major students

Xinyi Yang

China West Normal University, Nanchong 637000, China

Abstract: Since Holec first introduced the concept of “learner autonomy” in 1981, it has attracted widespread attention from scholars both domestically and internationally. College students, as the nation’s talents, should possess a certain level of English autonomous learning ability. This study aims to examine the current state of English autonomous learning among non-English major graduate students. The research was conducted with 97 non-English major college students as the subjects. Using a questionnaire by domestic scholar Lin Lilan as a tool, supplemented by semi-structured interviews, the study investigated the English autonomous learning situation of non-English major college students. It explored the autonomous learning situation of ethnic minority college students from three dimensions: self-management of learning ability, autonomous learning psychology, and autonomous learning behavior. The study analyzed the reasons for the lack of English autonomous learning ability among them and discussed how to cultivate the autonomous learning ability. The survey results are as follows: (1) The vast majority of ethnic minority college students have the awareness of autonomous learning and are willing to take responsibility for their own English learning. (2) Approximately sixty percent of non-English major college students have a certain level of self-management ability in learning, with clear English learning goals, the ability to make corresponding learning plans, and the capacity to conduct their own learning effectiveness assessments. (3) Most non-English major students do not demonstrate strong autonomy in their actual learning behavior, indicating a significant gap between their potential psychological tendencies and actual behavioral capabilities. Based on the above research, this paper proposes three suggestions for cultivating the autonomous learning ability of ethnic minority students: 1) Cultivate students’ English learning strategies; 2) Stimulate students’ learning motivation; 3) Actively create an autonomous learning environment.

Keywords: Learner Autonomy; English learning autonomy; non-English major students; cultivation of learner autonomy.

1. Introduction

Learner autonomy is a learning model guided by a completely new concept and also a challenge to traditional teaching concepts. It is also known as self-regulated learning (SRL), which has become a hot topic in the field of language education in recent years [1][2][3][4][5]. Zhang Xiuqin and Han Minli proved through experiments that involving students in curriculum design and integrating training in learning strategies can enhance the autonomy of graduate students in foreign language learning [6]. Guo Yan and Qin Xiaoping took seven universities in Wuhan and Zhengzhou as research cases, and explored the English autonomous learning ability of graduate students and the internal and external factors affecting autonomous learning ability through questionnaires and interviews [7]. The survey found that the English autonomous learning ability of master’s degree students only reached a medium level. The autonomous learning concept of graduate students has a certain impact on their autonomous learning ability. Self-assessment of English proficiency has a significant impact on autonomous learning ability. The investment of extracurricular study time is also an important factor affecting autonomous learning ability, while gender differences basically do not affect English autonomous learning ability.

However, in the context of college English learning, non-English major students often face numerous challenges. A significant portion of these students exhibit a passive attitude towards their English studies. Their attitudes towards English learning are often disheartened, with motivations that are either unclear or overly utilitarian, primarily focused on merely passing exams rather than truly mastering the

language. This leads to a lack of enthusiasm and initiative in English learning. This study aims to investigate the autonomy in English learning among non-English major college students. By exploring three dimensions of their English learning autonomy—self-management of learning, autonomous learning behavior, and autonomous learning psychology. The study seeks to examine the situation of autonomous English learning among non-English major college students. It analyzes the factors affecting their autonomous learning ability in English and explores how to cultivate the autonomous learning ability of non-English major college students. Through this research, we hope to provide valuable suggestions for enhancing the autonomy in English learning among non-English major students, thereby contributing to the improvement of college English education.

2. Literature Review

(1) Concept of Learner Autonomy

To begin with, some scholars like Dickinson and all tend to regard learner autonomy as a learning situation, in which the learner takes full responsibility of making learning-related decisions and putting these decisions into practice [8]. Then, Holec prefer to consider learner autonomy as a kind of ability. In 1981, Holec introduced his concept of learning autonomy in his writing *Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning* first, defining learner Autonomy as the learner’s ability to take charge of his own learning, namely, the ability to make plans, select learning materials, monitor the learning process and the ability to self-assess learning outcomes [9]. In practice, Holec’s definition of learner autonomy is the most cited in the field of autonomous learning research up till now.

The researchers favoring this kind of definition view the

nature of learner autonomy as a trait possessed by the learner. Holec, however, believes that this type of trait is not innate and it can be acquired by naturalistic exposure to specialized training. Holec stresses that the realization of learner autonomy requires the satisfaction of two conditions: first, learner's ability and willingness to manage his study; second, the possibility of utilizing this kind of ability.

Actually, some other researchers have endeavored to reveal the nature of autonomous learning by combining various factors. Li analyzes autonomous learning from two aspects—dimension and process. From the perspective of dimension, she regards autonomous learning as a way of learning that learners make choices, control and adjust in terms of all dimensions of learning; from the perspective of process, she considers autonomous learning as a process in which learners play an active role in setting learning goals, creating a learning environment, selecting learning strategies, monitoring the whole learning process and evaluating the results [10]. Xu holds that autonomous learning is self-monitoring learning that encompasses three elements: 1) to pre-arrange and plan one's learning; 2) to monitor and assess one's learning; 3) to control and regulate one's learning [11]. Ren Huanhuan asserted that autonomous learning was the systematic examination of the correlation between learners and their learning surroundings (termed "learning ecology"), encompassing the learners' employment of the learning environment and how it boosts their learning [12]. Subsequently, Xu Jinfen argued that autonomous learning has expanded with the rapid progress of information technology, giving rise to new dimensions of digital literacies [13].

In conclusion, despite differences in the definition of autonomous learning among scholars at home and abroad, there is still agreement on the core meaning, that is, autonomous learning is a mode of learning in which students learn selectively according to the needs of their development by using a variety of ways and strategies, thus realizing autonomous development.

(2) Related Research on Factors Affecting Autonomous Learning.

Since the 1990s, many renowned psycholinguists have published works. In addition to continuing research on the theoretical basis, implementation strategies, and practical outcomes of autonomous learning, they began to explore the influencing factors of autonomous learning and issues promoting language learning from different levels, including sociocultural, political environment, and psychological aspects. Cotterall conducted a factor analysis of learners' beliefs through questionnaires and identified six factors, including the role of teachers and the function of feedback [14]. After analyzing their relationship with autonomy, Cotterall concluded that learners' beliefs are very important. Many scholars have also researched the role of teachers in autonomous learning models, such as, Littlewood believed that learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are interdependent [15]. According to this study, teachers undertake multiple roles such as counselors, facilitators, coordinators, and guides [16]. These scholars generally believe that teachers should provide psychological and technical support for students. On the psychological level, it requires teachers to have good personal qualities, capable of promoting learners' mental health, stimulating their initiative, helping them eliminate uncertainties, and overcome obstacles. On the technical level, teachers need to guide students in analyzing learning needs, setting learning goals, planning,

and selecting learning materials for the implementation of autonomous learning. Additionally, helping students with self-assessment is also the responsibility of teachers. Kojima envisioned that with the assistance of various scaffolds used in classroom teaching, students could more easily cultivate and enhance their autonomous learning abilities to independently complete learning tasks through group collaboration [17]. This idea was confirmed in the study by Karen et al.: scaffolds can reduce students' cognitive load and enhance their autonomous learning abilities, while also showing that group collaboration and peer review play a positive role in the student learning process [18]. Wang suggested that the realization of learner autonomy is governed by a variety of intrinsic factors such as intelligence, motivation, and learning strategies, as well as by a variety of extrinsic factors such as the learning environment, teachers, and the educational system [19]. Hua Weifen investigated students' digital literacy and the current situation of their learning autonomy, and the results showed that a direct relationship exists between students' digital literacy and their LA [20]. The finding of this study is instructive in guiding English teachers to cultivate students' digital literacy to improve their independent learning ability in English. Li Ming integrated multiple internal personal factors related to autonomous learning into a strength of autonomous learning [21]. With parental support perceived, students will enhance their autonomous learning ability, thereby promoting their academic development autonomously.

(3) Related Research on Promoting Learner Autonomy

Many scholars have discussed and explored methods for cultivating autonomous learning abilities from different perspectives. Victori, M. and Lockhart, W. systematically discussed the promotion of learner autonomy through strategy training from both theoretical and practical angles [22]. Gardner and Miller promoted autonomous learning through self-access centers and detailed a range of issues from theory to practice regarding the establishment and implementation of self-access learning centers in their monograph [23]. Gao Fen applied reading circles to cultivate students' autonomous learning ability and found that reading circles can have an impact on students' learning motivation, learning methods and other aspects [24]. Chou applied the teaching of reading circles to English classrooms. Through a survey of 60 first-year college students, it was found that reading circles provided English learners with a way to establish linguistic and cultural schemas, improved their use of strategies for literary texts, and thus enhanced their reading comprehension skills [25]. Song Zheng conducted an experimental study on the scaffolding teaching model to enhance college students' autonomous English learning abilities. The research found that the experimental group students' autonomous English learning abilities were significantly improved, specifically manifested in noticeable improvements in both their autonomous English learning concepts and behaviors [26]. Rahman believed that it is important to cultivate students' autonomy from the perspective of research and management, especially from the teaching methods of teachers and learning methods from students [27]. Geng emphasized a series of ways in which teachers conceptualize learner autonomy. This study also revealed teachers' positive theoretical tendencies towards learner autonomy and their less optimistic views on the feasibility of promoting autonomy in practice [28].

3. Methodology

(1) Research Objectives and Research Questions

The principal aim of the research is to examine the degree of learner autonomy of non-English college students, which involves three dimensions: learners' self-management of study, learners' psychological tendency and learners' actual learning behaviors.

This research is dedicated to answer the following questions:

(a) To what extent do non-English students possess psychological tendencies of autonomous learning?

(b) How autonomous are non-English students in managing their English learning?

(c) How autonomous are non-English students in their actual learning behaviors?

(2) Research Subjects

The subjects of this study were 97 non-English major sophomores from a certain university. Among them, there were 63 female students and 34 male students, aged between 18 and 23. Additionally, Some of them hoped to pass College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) and thus studied English diligently. The majority of them were quite passive throughout the learning process and lacked the awareness to learn English independently after class. The author decided to investigate their current state of learner autonomy and to propose some suggestions on how to cultivate the autonomy in learning among non-English major students.

(3) Research Instruments

(a) Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study (Appendix 1) was adapted from Lin Lilan (2013). It was designed based on psychometric principles and has been proven to have good validity and reliability. All questions in Lin's questionnaire are written in Chinese to avoid misunderstandings and to ensure the reliability of the answers, given that the mother tongue of the research subjects is Chinese. The first part of the questionnaire introduces the purpose of the study. To encourage participants to answer questions sincerely and freely, they were informed that their English learning assessment would not be affected.

According to Lin Lilan (2013), the autonomy of college students' learning is constructed from three dimensions. The first dimension involves the learners' ability to manage their own learning, including the abilities to set learning goals, make learning plans, select learning materials, monitor the learning process, and evaluate learning outcomes. The second dimension is on the psychological level, involving the learners' willingness to take responsibility for their learning and their awareness of English acquisition and learning strategies. The third dimension is on the behavioral level, involving the learners' active participation in taking charge of their own learning and effectively using learning strategies. Therefore, the questionnaire adopted contains 38 questions covering the three dimensions of learning autonomy, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Three Dimensions of Lin's Questionnaire

Aspects of Survey	Total Number of Questions	Questions
Autonomous Learning Psychology	10	1-10
Autonomous Learning Management	16	11-26
Autonomous Learning Behaviors	12	27-38

Questions 1 to 10 attempt to understand whether participants have a psychological inclination towards autonomous learning, which involves the learners' willingness, confidence, and awareness when engaging in English learning. Questions 11 to 26 aim to investigate whether participants can manage their own learning, reflected in their abilities to define their own learning goals, make learning plans, select learning materials, monitor the learning process, and evaluate learning outcomes. Questions 27 to 38 are designed to understand the participants' actual involvement in autonomous learning. The questionnaire uses a five-point Likert scale to tally the results of each question.

(b) Interview

The interviews conducted in this study were designed to complement the questionnaire survey, from which qualitative data were obtained. The interviews addressed issues closely related to the questionnaire, such as the participants' beliefs about English learning and certain items in the questionnaire that required further explanation, in order to identify the reasons behind their choices in the survey. The author randomly interviewed six students via QQ software. Like the questionnaire, the interviews were conducted in Chinese to maintain smooth communication between the author and the students and to ensure accurate understanding by both parties.

The semi-structured interview consisted of eight questions. The first three questions focused on the interviewees' motivation and beliefs regarding English learning; questions four to seven dealt with the interviewees' views on learner autonomy; and question eight investigated the interviewees' knowledge of specific English learning methods across different aspects of English learning.

4. Results and Discussion

(1) Students' Psychological Tendencies of Autonomous learning

Autonomous learners should not only have the ability to self-manage their study but also should have psychology disposition of autonomous learning [15]. "Willingness" and "confidence" are considered to be the core psychological factors of autonomous learning. Another important psychological factor in self-directed learning is the learner's metacognitive awareness, which specifically refers to the learner's consciousness of language acquisition and the use of learning strategies.

The questionnaire designed to explore these aspects of autonomous learning begins with a section dedicated to gauging the psychological disposition of the learners. This

section comprises 10 meticulously crafted questions, each serving a distinct purpose in addressing the overarching research question: To what extent do non-English major college students exhibit a psychological inclination towards self-directed learning? This question is not merely academic; it has practical implications for educators who wish to foster a more autonomous learning environment among their students.

Question 1 of the questionnaire delves into the fundamental issue of accountability. It seeks to ascertain whether the participants acknowledge their role as the primary agents in their English learning process. This is a critical starting point, as it sets the tone for the learner's approach to education. If a student does not believe they are responsible for their learning, it is unlikely that they will take the necessary steps to direct their educational path. Questions 2 and 4 probe deeper into the learner's autonomy by examining their views on the customization of the learning content and materials. In today's diverse educational landscape, it is essential for learners to recognize that their unique needs and interests can and should inform the selection of learning resources. These questions aim to uncover whether participants understand the value of tailoring their learning experience to suit their individual profiles, thereby potentially increasing engagement and effectiveness. Question 3 shifts the focus to goal-setting, a vital aspect of self-directed learning. It investigates whether participants believe in the importance of establishing personal learning objectives. Goals serve as beacons, guiding learners through the complex terrain of language acquisition. By setting clear and achievable goals, learners can measure their progress and maintain motivation, which is why this question is integral to understanding the self-directed learning mindset. Question 5 addresses the role of self-assessment in the learning process. Beyond the traditional teacher-led evaluations, self-assessment empowers students to take an active role in monitoring their own learning outcomes. This question aims to determine whether students recognize the dual importance of external and internal assessments, fostering a more comprehensive and reflective approach to learning. Question 6 explores the learners' self-awareness regarding their competencies and areas for improvement in English learning. Self-awareness is a key metacognitive skill

that enables learners to strategically allocate their efforts and resources. By understanding their strengths and weaknesses, students can build on their successes and address their challenges more effectively. Question 7 taps into the motivational aspect of self-directed learning by examining the influence of interest on knowledge acquisition. It is widely recognized that interest can be a powerful motivator, and this question seeks to understand whether students believe that their personal interests can drive deeper and more meaningful learning experiences. Question 8 looks at the learners' resilience and self-encouragement in the face of challenges. Learning a language is not without its hurdles, and the ability to persevere and maintain a positive attitude is crucial. This question aims to uncover whether students possess the psychological fortitude to encourage themselves when confronted with difficulties in their English studies. Question 9 assesses the students' confidence in their ability to adhere to and complete their learning plans. Confidence is a significant psychological factor that can impact a learner's persistence and success. By understanding whether students trust in their capacity to follow through with their learning objectives, educators can better support their students in achieving their goals. Finally, Question 10 examines the students' belief in their ability to overcome obstacles in English learning. This question encapsulates the essence of self-efficacy, a belief in one's competence to successfully execute the actions required to manage prospective situations. A strong sense of self-efficacy can be a powerful catalyst for self-directed learning, as it empowers learners to tackle challenges head-on and view difficulties as opportunities for growth. Each of these questions is carefully designed to paint a detailed picture of the psychological landscape of self-directed learning among non-English major college students. By analyzing the responses, researchers can gain valuable insights into the extent to which these students are inclined towards self-directed learning and identify areas where support and guidance may be needed to foster a more autonomous and effective learning environment.

Table 4.1 presents the results of the top 10 questions, with SPSS used to obtain the frequency, mean, and standard deviation for each item.

Table 4.1. Students' Psychological Tendencies of Autonomous learning

Questions	N	Percentage(%)					Mean	Std
		Strongly Srongly agree Disagree	Agree	Neutal	Disagree	Agree		
Q1	97	37.1	49.5	10.3	1	2.1	4.19	0.821
Q2	97	20.6	53.6	20.6	3.1	2.1	3.88	0.845
Q3	97	39.2	38.1	14.4	3.1	5.2	4.03	1.065
Q4	97	41.2	43.3	9.3	4.1	2.1	4.18	0.913
Q5	97	43.3	47.7	4.1	3.1	2.1	4.27	0.848
Q6	97	20.6	39.2	14.4	11.3	14.4	3.40	1.328
Q7	97	37.1	29.9	5.2	13.4	13.4	3.65	1.444
Q8	97	20.6	56.7	17.5	4.1	1	3.92	0.799
Q9	97	15.5	56.7	15.5	8.2	4.1	3.71	0.968
Q10	97	16.5	49.5	28.9	3.1	2.1	3.75	0.709

According to Table 4.1, a significant majority of 86.6% of the surveyed non-English major students assert that they ought to shoulder the responsibility for their own English learning endeavors. This statistic underscores a prevalent awareness among the participants that they are the principal architects of their English language acquisition journey. It reflects a departure from the traditional model where learners may have been more passive recipients of instruction, highlighting a shift towards a more proactive and self-reliant approach to learning.

Delving deeper into the survey results, Question 2 reveals that 74.2% of the participants concur with the notion that learners should have the autonomy to determine the content of their English studies. This suggests a recognition of the importance of learner agency in shaping the educational experience, allowing individuals to tailor their learning paths according to their unique interests and goals. It indicates a move away from a one-size-fits-all curriculum towards a more personalized learning paradigm.

Furthermore, 77.3% of the students express their belief in the significance of autonomous learning objectives for English. This is a testament to the growing understanding that clear, self-defined goals can serve as powerful motivators, providing direction and a sense of purpose in the learning process. The relatively low percentage of 8.4% who disagree with this statement may point to a minority who are either less self-motivated or who prefer a more structured, externally guided learning environment.

The findings of Question 4 are particularly noteworthy, with 84.5% of the students advocating for the selection of English learning materials based on personal interests. This highlights the role of intrinsic motivation in enhancing engagement with the learning material. When learners are able to connect with the content on a personal level, it can lead to a more immersive and effective learning experience. It also suggests that educational resources should be diverse and adaptable to cater to the wide range of interests and preferences among learners.

Encouragingly, a substantial 91% of the participants acknowledge the necessity of self-assessment in addition to teacher evaluations. This reflects a maturing understanding of the learning process, where learners recognize the value of taking an active role in monitoring their own progress. Self-assessment can foster a sense of ownership over one's learning and enable learners to make informed decisions about their educational trajectories.

However, the results also reveal some areas of uncertainty. While 59.8% of the students are cognizant of their strengths and weaknesses in English learning, a notable 39.7% lack clarity in this regard. This gap indicates a potential need for more reflective practices or guidance to help learners develop a better understanding of their own learning profiles.

The insights gleaned from Question 7 offer a compelling narrative about the motivational drivers and self-perception of non-English major students in their pursuit of English language proficiency. A noteworthy majority, surpassing the halfway mark, of these students are of the opinion that their engagement with English learning materials is significantly amplified when the topics pique their interest. This correlation between interest and knowledge acquisition suggests that when students find the subject matter compelling, their cognitive absorption is enhanced, leading to a richer and more enduring learning experience. It implies that

the integration of personally relevant and intriguing content into the curriculum could be a potent strategy to foster deeper learning and retention among students.

Expanding on the theme of student resilience, the statistic that 77.3% of the students engage in self-encouragement during the trials of English learning is a testament to their inner strength and adaptability. This self-motivational behavior is a crucial psychological asset, enabling students to navigate through the complexities and occasional frustrations of language acquisition with a positive mindset. It reflects a growth-oriented approach where students view challenges not as terminal roadblocks but as opportunities for growth and learning, thereby maintaining their forward momentum in the learning process.

The fact that 72.2% of the students exhibit confidence in their ability to execute and fulfill their English learning tasks as per their personalized study plans is especially encouraging. This high level of self-assurance is a foundational element for successful learning, as it not only influences the students' engagement and effort but also shapes their overall educational trajectory. It indicates that the majority of students have internalized a sense of agency over their learning, believing in their capacity to set goals and achieve them. This positive attitude is a powerful predictor of academic success and lifelong learning, as it instills a sense of ownership and responsibility in students for their educational outcomes.

However, the data also presents a contrasting scenario where 34.1% of the students express a lack of confidence in their English studies. This minority, while smaller in proportion, represents a significant cohort that requires targeted intervention and support. The absence of confidence can be a formidable barrier to learning, potentially leading to disengagement and a diminished sense of self-efficacy. It is essential for educators to identify the root causes of this confidence gap, whether it stems from past negative experiences, perceived inadequacies, or a general sense of intimidation by the language learning process. By addressing these concerns through tailored strategies such as personalized feedback, additional resources, and motivational coaching, educators can help bridge this confidence divide and empower all students to approach English learning with a sense of optimism and capability.

The interviews conducted via QQ provide a qualitative dimension to these findings. The author discovered that the majority of non-English major students harbor a positive outlook towards English learning and exhibit a commendable degree of self-awareness. Their responses offer a glimpse into the mindset of these learners and the motivations that drive their autonomous learning practices.

Student 1: "Students definitely have to be responsible for their own learning. College is not like high school; we have a lot of free time at our disposal, so we must make good use of it. Regarding English learning, I set a rule for myself to memorize a certain number of new words, and then I look for some listening materials online to practice."

Student 2: "I really like English, and I have my own plan for learning it. I've always believed that learning depends on oneself. There are only a few English classes each week, and each class is only 40 minutes long. So, it's definitely necessary to take responsibility for one's own English learning."

Student 3: "I think the level of proficiency in English is greatly related to one's own efforts. The extent to which one

learns mainly depends on oneself.”

Overall, the majority of non-English major students demonstrate a high degree of autonomous learning psychological tendencies. Most students believe that they should be responsible for their own English learning, set their own learning goals as well as the content and materials, and evaluate their own English learning outcomes. In addition, many of them also show that they will actively plan and learn English.

(2) Students’ Abilities to Self-manage Their English study

Many scholars maintain that an autonomous language learner possesses the abilities to self-manage their own language learning, including the abilities to set learning goals, make learning plans, determine learning content, monitor learning process as well as evaluate learning outcomes [9]. Autonomous learners should determine their own learning objectives, content, and methods. At the same time, learners should participate in monitoring their own learning process and evaluating their own learning outcomes.

The second part of the questionnaire consists of 16 questions about self-management in English learning, aiming to answer the second research question—How autonomous are non-English major students in managing their own English learning? Question 11 investigates whether students are capable of devising their own English learning plans based on their actual situations. Question 12 is designed to find out if students frequently reflect on their

progress in fulfilling their learning plans. Question 13 seeks to understand if students possess effective English

learning methods. Question 14 examines whether students have clear goals when carrying out learning tasks. Question 15 aims to learn if students can employ various learning strategies to tackle learning tasks. Question 16 is intended to investigate if students have their own English learning goals. Question 17 is to clarify whether students have their own English learning plans in addition to the homework assigned by teachers. Question 18 is to understand if students are capable of conducting regular assessments of their own English learning. Question 19 investigates whether students can complete the learning tasks they have planned. Question 20 aims to learn if students have the habit of regularly checking the implementation of their plans. Question 21 is to understand if students can reflect on and summarize their own English learning methods. Question 22 investigates whether students can assess their learning outcomes before identifying any existing problems. Question 23 is to find out if students will reflect on their goal achievement after completing a learning task. Question 24 is to determine if students have clear requirements for the extent of their English progress. Question 25 is to discover if students engage in listening exercises to improve their listening comprehension skills. Question 26 is to find out if students are capable of assessing their English progress and devising corresponding plans.

Table 4.2 presents the results of the 16 questions related to the dimension of learning self-management, with SPSS used to obtain the frequency, mean, and standard deviation for each item.

Table 4.2. Students’ Abilities to Self-manage Their English learning.

Questions	N	Percentage(%)					Mean	Std
		Strongly Strongly agree Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree		
Q11	97	18.6	56.7	11.3	10.3	3.1	3.77	0.974
Q12	97	13.4	54.6	14.4	13.4	4.1	3.60	1.017
Q13	97	30.9	37.1	12.4	5.2	14.4	3.65	1.345
Q14	97	19.6	55.7	16.5	6.2	2.1	3.85	0.882
Q15	97	27.8	45.4	18.6	6.2	2.1	3.91	0.974
Q16	97	25.8	48.5	16.5	6.2	3.1	3.88	0.971
Q17	97	25.8	44.3	17.5	9.3	3.1	3.80	1.027
Q18	97	13.4	47.4	16.5	17.5	5.2	3.46	1.090
Q19	97	24.7	45.4	14.4	11.3	4.1	3.75	1.080
Q20	97	18.6	59.8	8.2	9.3	4.1	3.79	0.989
Q21	97	20.6	50.5	16.5	10.3	2.1	3.77	0.963
Q22	97	16.5	54.6	20.6	5.2	3.1	3.76	0.899
Q23	97	25.8	46.4	7.2	19.6	1.0	3.76	1.078
Q24	97	9.3	33.0	6.2	40.2	11.3	2.89	1.249
Q25	97	17.5	30.9	7.2	28.9	15.5	3.06	1.391
Q26	97	11.3	34.0	8.2	32	14.4	2.96	1.306

Questions 11, 12, 17, 19, and 20 pertain to the formulation and implementation of English learning plans. The results of Question 11 indicate that 75.3% of the students are capable of devising their own English learning plans based on their personal circumstances, yet a notable 13.4% have not formulated such plans. The findings of Question 12 reveal that 58% of the students typically reflect on the completion status of their established plans. The outcome of Question 17

shows that, in addition to the tasks assigned by teachers, 70.1% of the students have created their own English learning plans. The results of Question 19 demonstrate that 70.1% of the students are able to independently complete the learning tasks they have planned. It is gratifying to note that the results of Question 20 show that a high percentage, 78.4%, of students have the good habit of regularly checking the implementation of their plans. Based on the results of the aforementioned

questions, it is observed that approximately 75% of the students can formulate learning plans according to their own situations, while the number of students who reflect on the completion of their plans decreases by about 17%. Clearly, formulating plans is relatively easy, but adhering to and completing the formulated plans is much more challenging. Questions 14, 16, 23, and 24 are related to setting learning goals and ensuring their achievement. The results of Question 14 show that 75.3% of the students are goal-oriented when engaging in English learning tasks. The findings of Question 16 indicate that 74.3% of the students have their own English learning goals. The outcome of Question 23 shows that 72.3% of the students can reflect on the achievement of their English learning goals after completing specific tasks. The results of Question 24 reveal that 42.3% of the students have clear requirements for improving their English proficiency. Questions 18, 22, and 26 are associated with self-assessment in English learning. The results of Question 18 show that 60.8% of the students conduct regular assessments of their English learning. The findings of Question 22 indicate that 71.1% of the students are able to identify existing problems in their English learning. The outcome of Question 26 shows that 45.3% of the students can assess their English proficiency and devise corresponding plans based on the results. It is noteworthy that approximately 40% of the students lack awareness of self-assessing their learning outcomes, and more than half of the students do not formulate corresponding plans based on the assessment results. Questions 13, 15, 21, and 25 involve the use of learning strategies and methods. The effective use of learning strategies plays a significant role in enhancing learners' autonomy and paving the way for lifelong learning. The results of Question 13 show that 68% of the students believe they use effective English learning methods to study English, while 19.6% are unaware of effective English learning methods, indicating that they have not yet developed their own English learning style, which may lead to a lack of high English learning efficiency. The outcome of Question 15 shows that 73.2% of the students can employ

various learning strategies to accomplish different learning tasks. The results of Question 21 indicate that 71.1% of the students can reflect on and summarize their own English learning methods. The findings of Question 25 show that 73.2% of the students have engaged in specialized listening exercises to improve their listening skills. It is not difficult to see that approximately 32% of the students lack knowledge of English learning strategies, and they have not found effective learning methods, which may significantly hinder their ability to become autonomous English learners.

Furthermore, the qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews further corroborate the results presented in Table 4.2. Three interviewees informed the author that they had experience in formulating their own English learning plans, but they all agreed that it was difficult to strictly enforce and complete their plans. Three other interviewees stated that they only completed the tasks assigned by their English teachers because they were not very interested in English and therefore did not formulate relevant learning plans. When asked about their English learning goals, four interviewees responded that their goal was to pass the College English Test Band 4. Two interviewees indicated that they aspired to achieve the goal of fluent English expression and were committed to improving their English speaking skills.

After a detailed analysis, it was found that nearly 60% of non-English major students demonstrate a high level of autonomy in managing their English learning. This is specifically manifested in areas such as setting learning objectives, devising learning plans, implementing these plans, and evaluating learning efficiency.

(3) Students' actual autonomous learning behaviours

A learner may possess the psychological tendency for autonomous English learning and may also set learning goals, devise learning plans, monitor the learning process, and evaluate learning outcomes. However, this does not necessarily mean that they will engage in autonomous learning. It is the actual learning behaviors that can prove whether one is autonomous English learner.

Table 4.3. Students' actual autonomous learning behaviours

Questions	N	Percentage(%)					Mean	Std
		Strongly Srongly agree Disagree	Agree	Neutal	Disagree	Agree		
Q27	97	7.2	21.6	16.5	39.2	15.5	2.66	1.189
Q28	97	2.1	6.2	7.2	56.7	27.8	1.98	0.890
Q29	97	4.1	11.3	15.5	44.3	24.7	2.26	1.083
Q30	97	4.1	14.4	6.2	51.5	23.7	2.24	1.097
Q31	97	5.2	12.4	9.3	42.3	30.9	2.19	1.158
Q32	97	5.2	20.6	14.4	45.5	14.4	2.57	1.126
Q33	97	17.5	24.7	18.6	29.9	9.3	3.11	1.274
Q34	97	7.2	15.5	16.5	44.3	16.5	2.53	1.156
Q35	97	4.1	10.3	11.3	50.5	23.7	2.21	1.050
Q36	97	14.4	27.8	9.3	34.0	14.4	2.94	1.337
Q37	97	4.1	13.4	13.4	36.1	33.0	2.20	1.160
Q38	97	6.2	28.9	11.3	35.1	18.6	2.69	1.245

The third part of the questionnaire consists of 12 questions about actual autonomous learning behaviors, aiming to answer the third research question: To what extent do non-

English major students exhibit autonomy in their actual English learning behaviors? Question 27 investigates whether students have the habit of previewing before English classes.

Question 28 is designed to understand if students can find English learning materials based on their interests or needs. Question 29 examines whether students have the habit of reviewing the content they have learned. Question 30 aims to learn if students are good at searching for English learning materials online or through the library. Question 31 seeks to know if students try to improve their listening comprehension skills by frequently listening to English tapes or online materials. Question 32 is used to discover if students have the habit of reading in English. Question 33 surveys whether students use English to record daily events. Question 34 is used to understand if students can take advantage of in-class or after-class opportunities to practice English speaking. Question 35 aims to learn if students can select listening materials that match their English progress. Question 36 investigates whether students self-test their learning outcomes after studying one or two units. Question 37 is designed to find out if students learn English by studying the social and cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries. Question 38 surveys whether students ask their English teachers or classmates for help to solve problems.

Table 4.3 presents the results of the 12 questions related to the dimension of actual autonomous learning behaviors, with SPSS used to obtain the frequency, mean, and standard deviation for each item.

The results of Question 27 show that only 28.8% of students preview before English classes, with the majority lacking the awareness of pre-class preparation. The findings of Question 28 indicate that 8.3% of students are adept at finding learning materials based on their interests. Combined with the results of the interviews, it suggests they may be more inclined to seek out English learning materials that can help them prepare for exams. Notably, the results of Question 29 reveal that only 15.4% of students regularly review the knowledge they have learned, with most students not engaging in regular review sessions. The results of Question 30 show that only 18.5% of students tend to search for learning materials on the internet or by visiting the library. Since many students aim to pass the College English Test Band 4, their English learning materials are primarily focused on practice exercises. For English learners, the practice of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills is essential. A highly autonomous learner typically tries to practice these skills as much as possible. Questions 31, 32, 33, 34, and 35 pertain to students' practice of the four basic English skills. According to the results of Question 31, only 20.8% of students attempt to improve their listening skills by listening to English tapes and online materials. The results of Question 32 indicate that over 50% of students do not have a habit of reading in English, which is a crucial aspect of English learning. From the results of Question 33, it can be seen that only 42.2% of students feel inclined to record daily events in English. Notably, based on the interview results, most students remain at the stage of thinking about it without taking action. The results of Question 34 show that 22.7% of students attempt to practice speaking English by taking advantage of in-class or after-class opportunities. In universities, there are few opportunities to practice speaking, both in and out of class, so they resort to artificial intelligence or attending English corners for oral practice. The results of Question 35 show that 14.4% of students believe they can choose listening materials that match their English proficiency, with over 50% of students feeling their listening skills are poor and finding it difficult to locate suitable

listening materials. From the survey results of these five questions, it is evident that non-English major students lack the awareness to practice English reading, writing, speaking, and listening, with a particular deficiency in listening and speaking practice.

Qualitative data collected from interviews conducted via QQ also reveal what the quantitative data on students' actual learning participation show. Most non-English major students exhibit low autonomy in their actual learning behaviors.

Student 1: "My listening skills are particularly poor because I hardly listened to English before college. I want to pass the Band 4 exam, so I'm now intensively practicing listening. I usually use the listening materials from the purchased test papers. As for speaking, I basically don't practice it. Regarding English reading, I also practice by doing reading comprehension questions from test papers and haven't read any original English novels. As for writing, I basically neglect it."

Student 2: "I mainly look for English materials online. I like to practice listening by listening to English songs; I can sing many English songs now. I've always wanted to improve my speaking skills, so I often go to the speaking corner. I don't like doing tedious reading comprehension; I only read English articles that interest me."

Student 3: "I'm really afraid of learning English, but it's a required course. I don't have my own English learning plan; I only complete the homework assigned by the teacher."

After a detailed analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data regarding students' actual learning behaviors, it is evident that most participants exhibit a low degree of autonomous learning in their actual learning behaviors, despite their relatively high psychological inclination towards autonomous learning.

(4) Factors Affecting the Autonomy of Non-English Major Students in English Learning

(a) Learning Strategies

Effective learning strategies are crucial for fostering students' autonomy in English learning. When students master a range of strategies, such as time management, resource utilization, and self-monitoring, they are more likely to take control of their learning process. For example, students who are good at managing their study time can allocate sufficient hours to different aspects of English learning, such as vocabulary building, grammar practice, and listening comprehension. They can also identify and utilize various resources, such as textbooks, online materials, and language learning apps to enhance their learning outcomes.

(b) Learning Motivation

Motivation is a key driving force for self-directed learning. Intrinsic motivation stems from an individual's interest and enjoyment in learning English, which can significantly enhance student' autonomy. Students with intrinsic motivation are more likely to actively engage in self-directed learning activities during their free time, such as reading English novels, watching English movies, or participating in English corners. They view learning English as a pleasurable and fulfilling experience, rather than just an academic task. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation, such as the desire to pass exams or gain better job prospects, can also promote autonomy to some extent. However, compared to intrinsic motivation, it may not be as sustainable. Therefore, cultivating intrinsic motivation is crucial for fostering autonomy in English learning.

(c) Learning Environment

A supportive and conducive learning environment is crucial for students' autonomous English learning. This includes both the physical and social aspects of the learning context. Well-equipped classrooms with multimedia resources, quiet and comfortable study areas in the library, and a campus environment that encourages language practice can all facilitate autonomous learning. They can learn from each other, share learning experiences, and motivate one another. Teachers can also create a positive learning atmosphere by encouraging student participation, providing constructive feedback, and fostering a sense of community in the classroom. However, if the learning environment is not conducive to autonomous learning, for example, if there is a lack of resources or if the classroom culture does not encourage student initiative, it can impede students' autonomy in English learning.

(d) Teachers' Guidance Role

Although the ultimate goal of autonomous learning is for students to take responsibility for their own learning, the guidance of teachers is indispensable in the initial stages. Teachers can introduce students to various learning strategies and techniques, provide clear learning objectives and expectations, and offer personalized feedback to help students improve. It is important for teachers to strike a balance between providing necessary support and giving students the freedom to explore and learn on their own.

5. Significance

Through this survey, the author found that the situation of autonomous English learning among non-English major students is not ideal. There are many reasons for this outcome: learning motivation, learning strategies, learning environment, etc.

6. Conclusion

Firstly, regarding the extent to which non-English major college students possess psychological tendencies towards autonomous learning, the study found that a significant proportion of students exhibit a high degree of such tendencies. More than half of them have the awareness to manage their own learning, agreeing that they should set their own learning goals, determine the content and materials for learning, and evaluate their English learning outcomes independently.

Secondly, concerning the autonomy of non-English major college students in managing their own learning, the study found that nearly 60% of the participants show a high degree of autonomy in managing their English learning, which is reflected in their ability to set learning goals, make learning plans, implement these plans, and assess their learning efficiency.

Thirdly, regarding the autonomy of non-English major college students in their actual learning behaviors, the study found that most students exhibit a low degree of learner autonomy in their actual learning behaviors.

It can be observed that there is a significant gap between the psychological tendency towards autonomous English learning and the actual English learning behaviors. The willingness to manage one's own learning does not necessarily translate into actual autonomous learning behaviors. Although most non-English major students lack autonomous learning behaviors, they have the psychological inclination to do so. Therefore, we can start from three aspects:

learning strategies, learning motivation, and learning environment, to transform students' learning willingness into actual learning behaviors. The author firmly believes that with appropriate guidance and teaching, they will greatly enhance their ability to execute autonomous learning.

References

- [1] Benson, P. (2013). Learner Autonomy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 47(4): 839-843.
- [2] Murphy, L. (2008). Supporting Learner Autonomy: Developing Practice through the Production of Courses for Distance Learners of French, German and Spanish. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(1): 83-102.
- [3] Tholin, J. (2008). Learner and Teacher Autonomy: Concepts, Realities, and Responses. *ELT Journal*, 63(2): 179-181.
- [4] Little, D. (2007). Language Learner Autonomy: Some Fundamental Considerations Revisited. *International Journal of Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1(1): 14-29.
- [5] Senbayrak, M., Ortaçtepe, D., & Trimble, K. (2007). An exploratory study on Turkish EFL learners' Readiness for Autonomy and Attitudes Toward Self-access Centers. *TESOL Journal*, 10(2): e00401.
- [6] Zhang Xiuqin, & Han Minli. (2007). Enhancing Postgraduates' Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning through Participation in Curriculum Design. *Academic Degrees & Graduate Education*, (11), 46-49.
- [7] Guo Yan, & Qin Xiaoqing. (2010). A Study on Postgraduates' Autonomous English Learning Ability and Related Influencing Factors. *Journal of Beijing International Studies University*, (6).
- [8] Dickinson, L. (1987). *Self-instruction in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [9] Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- [10] Li Hongmei. (2004). A Discussion on Autonomous Learning Models in a Network Environment. *E-education Research*, (4): 45-52.
- [11] Xu Jinfen. (2006). *The Theory and Practice of Autonomous Foreign Language Learning in Universities*. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.
- [12] Ren Huanhuan. (2016). The Connotations and Characteristics of Autonomous Learning from the Perspective of Educational Ecology. *Teaching and Management*, (24): 1-3.
- [13] Xu Jinfen. (2020). The Composition and Cultivation of Autonomous Learning Ability of Foreign Language Majors. *Foreign Languages World*, (06): 26-32+62.
- [14] Cotterall, S. (1995). Developing a Course Strategy for Learner Autonomy. *ELT Journal*: 49 (3):219-227.
- [15] Littlewood, W. (2000). Do Asian Students Really Want to Listen and Obey?. *ELT Journal* 54 (1).
- [16] Tan Hong. (2001). A Brief Discussion on the Role of Teachers in College Students' Autonomous English Learning. *Journal of Sichuan International Studies University*, (3): 104-105.
- [17] Kojima, H. (2012). Positive Interdependence for Teacher and Learner Autonomy: The Case of the CARTA Program. In *Realizing Autonomy: Practice and Reflection in Language Education Contexts*, (12): 167-181.
- [18] Karen, B., Fitzgerald, H. E., Sonka, S. T., Furco, A., & Swanson, L. (2020). The centrality of engagement in higher education. In *Building the Field of Higher Education Engagement*, (1) : 201-219.

- [19] Wang Youkun. (2020). The Impact of College Students' English Learning Motivation Self-system on Motivational Regulation Strategies. *Foreign Language Education in China*, 3(01): 53-61+88-89.
- [20] Hua Weifen. (2020). Digital Literacy and Autonomous English Learning. *Foreign Language Education*, 41(5): 66-7.
- [21] Li Ming, Shang Xinhua, & Fang Xiaoyi. (2022). From Parental Educational Involvement to Academic Achievement: Autonomous Support and Autonomous Learning Ability as Mediating Links. *Psychological Development and Education*, (6): 839-847.
- [22] Victori, M. & W. Lockhart. (1995). Enhancing Metacognition in Self-directed Language Learning. *System* (23): 223-234.
- [23] Gardner, D. & L. Miller. (2002). *Establishing Self-Access: From Theory to Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [24] Gao Bian. (2021). A Study on the Effect of the "Reading Circle" Teaching Model on High School Students' Autonomous English Learning Ability. Central China Normal University.
- [25] Chou M H. (2022). Using literature circles to teach graded readers in English: an investigation into reading performance and strategy use. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 16 (2).
- [26] Song Zheng. (2022). Improving College Students' Autonomous English Learning Ability through Scaffolding Teaching. *Oversea English*, (05): 162-174.
- [27] Rahman, E. A., Yunus, M. M. & Hashim, H. (2022). Learner Autonomy between Students and Teachers at a Defence University: Perception vs. Expectation. *Sustainability* 14. Regulated Learning Perspective. *Educational Psychology Review* 33: 1319-1351.
- [28] Geng, Y. (2022). Design of the autonomous learning system for students in remote opened education based on MOOC. *International Journal of Industrial and Systems Engineering: MISE* (4): 40.
- [29] Lin Lilan. (2013). The Construction and Validation of a College Students' Autonomous English Learning Ability Scale Based on a Three-dimensional Concept. *Foreign Languages World*, (4).