Realization of Autonomy and English Language Proficiency among Iranian High School Students

Parisa Mohamadpour
Islamic Azad University (Science & Research Branch), Tehran, Iran

Abstract—Though pretty successful in other educational areas, Iranian high school students have proved to be poor performers when it comes to English. The educational system plus the social culture they are living in are also generally agreed to be test-driven and collectivist in nature. This study, having a autonomy-proficiency bound, investigated the autonomy level of 30 senior high school students in Tehran by means of a questionnaire and interview and their English proficiency using PET. The data were analyzed by T-test with SPSS 16.0. The results showed that English proficiency and learner autonomy go significantly hand in hand, as in cases of different autonomy level great difference in proficiency test was observed while those of similar autonomy scored much of similar proficiency scores.

Index Terms—learner autonomy, Iranian EFL learners, language proficiency

I. INTRODUCTION

In spite of Iranian students' advances and worldwide fame in math and science festivals (Shabani, 1995), their English learning report card is not as glorious. A lot of Iranian English language learners experience serious difficulty with English at the high school level. As Yazdanpanah (2007) puts it poor performance of Iranian learners is not hard to locate. The students normally find English classes too difficult, boring, and useless. Besides, many feel a lot of pressure to perform on language exams. They sometimes even go great length to memorize answers to previous exam questions, hoping to find the same questions on their exam papers.

There is this widely held belief that the Iranians, as many Asian nationalities (Nakata, 2011), are experiencing the transition age form traditional culture that favors judicious mind to modern era when creativity and self-reliance are receiving their deserved credit. Nakata (2011) cites Esaki's (2002) stating that learners in such a transit move from being taught with a focus on memorization and remembering to self teaching through questioning, considering, searching and doing. Iran, as does Japan for instance, has its culture rooted in collectivist basis where people see themselves primarily as group members with strong group loyalty and interdependence. As Holiday (2007, p. 20) maintains, for the collectivists "silence is virtue, face is derived from the group where members are satisfied with very few choices." Here the researcher is to know if the mischief Iranian language learners experience has anything to do with their autonomy level. As Nakata (2011) maintains, success in such a situation is the extent to which personal autonomy is achieved because it is the key to motivation and motivation is a grand driving force for creative performance.

Where Iranian students are exposed to facing the double whammy of a collectivist culture and a test-driven educational culture, a way to experiencing the joy of a savvy process called 'language learning' may be learner autonomy. This present paper will illuminate the extent to which Iranian foreign language learners of English are autonomous and will see if this factor has any influence on their being more successful language learners.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner autonomy has long invited interest in the field of second language learning. Gardner (2011) refers to Holec' (1981) seminal work "Autonomy and foreign language learning" as what drew attention to the concept of learner autonomy. Developments of Applied Linguistics and language learning pedagogy, enriched with research into second language learning, made an increasing demand on 'learner-centeredness' and this shift of interest to learners as sources of information for the learning process led to the research body being drawn to autonomy in language learning and teaching (Benson, 2001). Teacher and learner autonomy has, thus, turned into a buzzword in the field of foreign language education (Little, 2007). Prominent researchers in the field (Benson 2001; Dame, 1995; Dickenson, 1995; Little, 1991; Vickers & Enn, 2006) have all regarded autonomy as prerequisite for a successful and effective learning where some have gone to the extreme of asserting that "the genuinely successful learners have always been autonomous" (Little, 1995, p. 179) while the definition of the term is much of a matter of debate (Benson & Voller, 1997). Little (2002) describes such a definition as not easy because its tendencies to be mixed up with self-instruction.

A. Learner Autonomy Defined

Quite many articles and publications on autonomy bear a definition Henri Holec has offered the literature. Holec (1981, p. 3, cited in Dislen, 2011) defines autonomy as "the ability to take charge if one's learning" and moves on to

explain that an autonomous learner holds the responsibility for all decisions concerning all aspects of their learning as to determining objectives, defining the contents and progressions, selecting the implemented methods and techniques, monitoring the acquisition procedure, and evaluating what has been done. Little (1990, p. 7) proceeds to make a useful list of what autonomy is not as:

► Autonomy is not a synonym for self-instruction.
► Autonomy is not limited to learning without a teacher.
► In the classroom context, autonomy does not entail an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher and thus it is not a matter of letting the learners get on with things as best they can.
► On the other hand, autonomy is not something that teachers do to learners; that is, it is not another teaching method.
► Autonomy is not a single, easily described behavior.
► Autonomy is not a steady state achieved by learners. (Little, 1990, p. 7)

Allright (1990, cited in Oxford, 2003) is among the ones who take psychological stance toward the definition of autonomy and believes that autonomy involves an 'attitude' of willingness to take responsibility to take a concrete action. As manifest in Little's view point, looking at autonomy as a construct synonymous to self-instruction and self-access is quite a partial view and that is the basis on which Little (1991, cited in Little 1997) also joins those who extend the autonomy definition to a more psychological stance. He contends that autonomy is not solely a matter of organizing learning but more of a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making which would finally lead to independent action while the learner establishes a sort of psychological relation to the process and content of what to be learned. Another psychological stance is taken by According to Little (1995, p. 175), autonomous learners has acquired "the means to transcend the barrier learning and living"; something that is of great concern to both educational theory and curriculum development. Surely enough, such capacity to take charge of one's own learning at this level is not innate to learners and should be learned and developed. Dickenson (1995) proceeds to state that recognizing autonomy as a capacity or attitude rather than as overt action is essential since what we are after is to have autonomous learners in teacher-directed classroom setting besides the situation where the learner has the opportunity to involve in self-access learning.

Moreover, what Cotterall (2008) points out regarding Holec's definition adds to the point Little (1991, cited in Little, 1997) makes over Holec's seminal definition. Cotterall's first point is that autonomy to Holec is a potential capacity that needs to be developed in learners and second, his definition focuses on the technical aspect of learning focused on the introduction of methodological skills needed to manage one's learning.

As Onazawa (2010) puts it The idea of autonomy has been seen as connected with the concept of self-directed learning, learner training, independence, interdependence and individualization, all of which leads us to confusion over what exactly autonomy is. Thus, autonomy often goes under several different names, such as self-regulatory learning, self-directed learning, the learner-centered approach and independent learning. With such a confusing identity, defining autonomy is so complex that there have been various interpretations depending on how autonomy is looked at.

B. Differing Views on Autonomy

Besides the conflict over the terminology, the concept appearing to have overlaps with other constructs is of debate, and self-directed learning makes for a good example. Trying to clear the case, Rivers (2001) states that defining distinction between the two demands course and structure changes as the demonstrations of autonomy have been based on the learners' self-assessment of learner style, learning strategy preferences and their progress in the language. The experienced learners tried to take control of the entire learning process.

Kumaravadivelu (2003) sees autonomy as being of two kinds; 'academic autonomy' and 'liberatory autonomy'. In his view, academic autonomy pertains to a narrow view of the concept where the learner is simply enabled to learn how to learn and be a strategic practitioner to then realize the learning potentials and objectives. On the other hand, liberatory autonomy which concerns a broad view of autonomy helps with the critical thinking side of the issue to assist learners to realize their potentials. This way, learning to learn – the narrow view of autonomy – is treated as a means to an end.

What Little (1995) argues comes in line with Kumaravadivelu's (2003) narrow view of autonomy. Little (1995, p. 175) argues that while learning strategies and learner training can play an important supporting role in the development of learner autonomy, the "decisive factor" will always be the nature of the pedagogical dialogue; and that since learning arises from interaction and interaction is characterized by interdependence, the development of autonomy in learners presupposes the development of autonomy in teacher.

Littlewood (1999), also, sees autonomy as a construct defined in terms of levels. Based on Littlewood (1999) there is a mutually supportive relationship between autonomy and relatedness which is the basis for the two levels of autonomy he introduces: "proactive autonomy" and "reactive autonomy" (Littlewood, p. 75).'Proactive autonomy' regulates the direction of activity as well as the activity itself. That is, according to Holec (1981, cited in Littlewood, 1999), learners are able to take charge of their own learning, determine their objectives, select methods and techniques and evaluate what has been acquired. On the other hand, as Littlewood (1999) contents, 'reactive autonomy' regulates the activity once the direction has been set. After the direction has been set, reactive autonomy enables learners to organize their

resources autonomously in order to reach their goal. It is this form of autonomy that stimulates the learner to do their learning.

To Benson (2001, p. 110) is "an attribute of learner" and has very little to do with the learning situation and this is what makes the process of fostering autonomy a "developing process" within the learner. In line with this idea, Benson (2001) cites Nunan's (2000) 5-level of autonomy plus his view on autonomy as a construct in which learners can attain differing levels through the gradual, piecemeal processes of fostering it within them. The five levels are as follows:

► Awareness, where learners are made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the program and encouraged to know the learning strategies implications of pedagogical tasks and to identify their own learning style.

► Involvement, where learners are involved in setting their goals from a range of alternative options.

► Intervention, where learners are given stance to modify and adapt goals, content and learning tasks.

► Creation, where learners create their own goals, content and learning tasks.

► Transcendence, where learners go beyond the classroom learning and link it to the world beyond and this gives them a reflection opportunity using which learners themselves become teachers and researchers.

C. Autonomy and Proficiency

In learning English as a second and foreign language, scholars and researchers has paired the importance of autonomy with learning strategies, motivation, cooperative learning and language proficiency, to name a few. Regarding reaching optimal language proficiency, mahdavinia and Nabatchi Ahmadi (2011) assume the success in learning a language is directly introduced into the process through having a responsible attitude. That is, high achieving students are, according to literature, those who devote themselves to learning more independently through having their own way to learn.

Umeda (2000, cited in Onazava, 2010, p. 128) specifies three reasons for considering autonomy as significant in the general education perspective. They are, (1) fostering a survival capacity to cope with rapid social changes, (2) developing the learner's individuality, and (3) improving the diversity of the learner's cultural and educational background.

Ur (1999) regards autonomy as one of the three stages of the process of learning a skill. She defines the process of learning a skill by means of a three-stage course of instruction: verbalization, automation and autonomy, and explains briefly that at the last stage, "learners continue to use the skill on their own, becoming proficient and creative." (Ur, 1999, p. 4)

If not being the best, proficiency gain is the quickest and the most stead-fast way of measuring learning success. Thus this study aims to see if the link between autonomy and English proficiency hold valid in Iranian context.

III. THE STUDY

A. Research Goals

The present study attempted to explore Iranian high school students with regard to (1) their awareness of the concept of autonomy and learner autonomy which leads to holding responsible for their own language learning (the questionnaire survey), and (2) their perception of the concept and their readiness to change to be what is defined as autonomous (the individual interview).

To this end, the researcher adopts a mixed methods design combining a quantitative questionnaire study and a qualitative interview study, which helps getting a much clearer picture of the research quantitative findings. This is what Creswell and Clark (2011) refer to as 'explanatory sequential design where the collected qualitative data is analyzed and this phase is followed by a gathering of a follow-up qualitative data and its analysis which finally leads to concluding interpretation. In fact the information retrieved from the quantitative phase of the study initiated the questions that came to the researcher's mind at the time of interview.

B. Participants

Thirty female senior high school students studying at Chamran High school, Tehran participated in this study. They were all native Persian speakers, 17 years old and majoring in Mathematics who all had English as a course in the same semester the study was conducted in.

C. Interview Participation

The participants were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (1) they agreed to participated the interview voluntarily, (2) keeping a balance between those of high English proficiency and low English proficiency, (3) the sense of rapport between the interviewer and the students so that they could discuss their learning orientations and talk about their problems. This point, as Nakata (2011) points out, is important as a good relationship plays a major role in having an interview living up to its intentions especially where the interviewees are to reflect on themselves and verbalize their reflections. The participants felt safe under the unanimity of the questionnaires but interviews would give them fears of public humiliation, or probable negative views on the part of their English teacher in case she gets to know about the results. They were all ensured of data security and unanimity yet just 7 volunteered which were, then, trimmed to 2 through the first 2 criteria of interviewee selection.

D. Data Collection and Analysis

1. Proficiency test

The participants' scores on five classroom quizzes and their midterm examination plus the ongoing assessment done by their teacher were based for their assumed English proficiency level. Besides the packed high school program which did not let the researcher administer a proficiency test of her own choice, the participants' performance on their high school curriculum basis provided useful leads to how the subject matter was dealt with in the very high school and it came much handy while conducting the interviews with the participants regarding their views on how close-to-reality their proficiency school scores were.

2. The questionnaire

The the 30-item autonomy questionnaire was devised drawing on Cotterall and Crabbe (1999), Cotterall's (2005) 34-item Learner Autonomy Questionnaire and Spratt et al.'s (2002) 43-item Autonomy Questionnaire. The questionnaire was devised in three sections; the first section goes for demographic questions such as age, gender, field of study and years of attending English classes. The second section is a closed questionnaire with 30 items arranged in 5-point likert scale format. A neutral point was indeed included in the scale to remove the burden of pushing a reply when the participant can't really decide on agreeing or disagreeing. The first 14 items, with a likert ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, assessed the learners' belief toward learner's role, teacher's role and language learning strategy. This mainly asked the participants about how important they perceived certain strategies for promoting their own learning autonomy and how their teacher let autonomy flow in class. Next 16 items, with a likert ranging from strongly never to always, were designed to see students' individual efforts, self assessment and strategy use.

The questionnaires were administered in Persian during the last 30 minutes of a theology class with the participants being fully briefed in advance.

3. The interview

Conducted in Persian, the interview was done individually in the high school's office on November 8th and 9th, 2011 and lasted for about 30 minutes each. The researcher conducted the interview being cautious not to lead the thought, impose ideas and pull words. The questions implemented to conduct the interview revolved around the ones of the questionnaire the interviewees had already filled in addition to the ones that crossed the interviewer's mind on the spot as follow-up questions.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS.

Item No.	Learner/frequency		Paired sample
learner's awareness about autonomous learning	Mean	S. D.	t-test
1. Learners have to be responsible for finding their own ways of practicing the language.	2.73	0.77	8.40
2. Learners have to identify their strengths and weaknesses.	2.81	0.76	8.69
3. Learners should be responsible for planning their own learning.	2.51	0.79	7.77
4. Learners should set goals for their learning.	2.52	0.90	7.59
5. Errors are signs of learning	2.79	0.77	7.77
6. It's the teacher's job to correct all my mistakes.	2.23	0.77	7.59
7. The role of the teacher is to create opportunities for me to practice.	2.81	0.72	8.04
8. The best way to learn a language is by the teacher's explanation.	1.86	0.85	6.24
9. A lot of learning can be done without a teacher.	1.56	0.82	9.20
10. It is important to make decisions about one's own learning.	1.86	0.79	5.29
11. Using English in and outside classroom is important for developing language skills.	2.56	0.90	9.97
12. Exams motivate learners to study hard.	1.89	0.97	7.09
13. It's useful to do activities in pair or group.	3.21	0.97	6.90
14. Being evaluated by others is helpful.	2.93	0.90	7.40
Learner's effort toward learning English			
15. I look for people I can talk to in English.	2.72	0.81	10.29
16. I try to learn English without a teacher.	2.84	0.84	8.54
17. I practice English in and outside class.	3.05	0.85	7.40
18. I review lessons in advance.	3.11	0.83	6.93
19. I ask teachers to explain if I couldn't understand the lesson.	2.74	0.89	9.21
20. I use library to develop my English.	3.04	1.00	8.10
21. I set goals for improving my English.	2.95	0.83	9.06
22. I listen to radio, watch movies, read books, magazines, and news paper to improve my English.	2.91	0.76	8.09
23. I guess the meaning of a word.	2.56	0.86	7.20
24. I make decision on my own language learning.	2.55	0.77	10.29
25. I take risk in learning English language.	3.10	0.78	7.50
26. I make summaries (take notes) of information that I hear or read.	3.13	0.76	6.78
27. I write my weaknesses and strengths in learning English.	2.67	0.88	9.34
28. I check my own progress by doing exercises.	2.74	0.89	7.02
29. I am confident while I speak in front of people.	3.11	0.69	8.54
30. I do my class and home work.	2.99	0.96	8.28

(p<.001)

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the questionnaire survey were very interesting. Table 1 creates a general picture of how the questionnaire's entries were perceived and implemented by the participants.

As it is shown in Table 1, participants' awareness of learner autonomy is reported as low. There is statistically different paired sample t-test result for high proficiency learners and awareness of learner autonomy in every item, which tells the researcher the more proficient learners are not necessarily better aware of autonomous learning behaviors. That is, those high proficiency learners are more aware of autonomous learning but generally speaking, such awareness is low among high and low proficiency learners. Thais indicates that awareness to autonomous learning practice is generally low but comes in degrees when it comes to rang of students from high to low proficiency.

Based on the evidence another defining characteristic is observed in item 8, "The best way to learn a language is by the teacher's explanation", item 9, "Exams motivate learners to study hard", item 10, "It is important to make decisions about one's own learning and item 12 "A lot of learning can be done without a teacher". They have the lowest means and this implies some hidden aspect of how they perceive their own learning process. Items 8 and 9 being of low means indicate that the perception of something not being satisfactory with the teacher centered classroom has been brought to the fore but items 10 and 12 being of low means would indicate that the learners are not sure how to survive learning process without a teacher (items 12) and when they are explicitly presented with an aspect of autonomous learning (item 10) as the solution to the problem they cannot identify it and rate it as what they do not agree with.

When focusing on the data driven from the last part of the questionnaire (learners' effort toward learning English), the interesting feature is that participants are generally moderately autonomous (all items in the learners' English learning efforts have means above average with the lowest being 2.55 and the highest being 3.13). The least mean is obtained on item 24, "I make decisions on my own language learning", which best gets explained through the autonomy definitions offered to the literature by Holec (1981, cited in Dislen, 2011) and Little (1991, cited in Little, 1997). They both emphasize the responsibility for all decisions concerning all aspects of their learning while Little sees it more through the critical reflection the learner has on this decision-making which would finally lead to their autonomous learning behavior. This aspect seems to be missing in the Iranian high school learners through the researcher's personal teaching experience as well as the data gathered in this study.

What got confirmed through the interviews is that their not being willing to take the responsibility of their own learning is not the issue; further, they are not accustomed to making decisions and feeling responsible through what might have cultural roots. As Holliday (2007) points out collectivist cultures set the case for the individuals to see beauty in unity and feeling content in tranquility of group protection. As Dam (2011) points out transmitting autonomy to outer class life is an essential part of autonomy promotion and in this very case transferring autonomy from the out-of-class life into the classroom is must.

Those items that have means over 3.04 draw on an interesting aspect of learners autonomy. Item 17 "I practice English in and outside class.", item 18 "I review lessons in advance.", item 20 "I use library to develop my English", item 25 "I take risk in learning English language.", item 26 "I make summaries (take notes) of information that I hear or read.", and item 29 "I am confident while I speak in front of people." Talk of the learners' being willing to learn the language and taking the steps that have long been believed to be the strategies for good language learners like previewing before the class meets, taking notes or not being afraid of talking in front of others. This calls for the demand on strategy instruction and autonomy promotion among them.

Apart from analyzing each item and calculating the correlation between the proficiency level and the learners' reflections on each item, the general autonomy scores and general proficiency levels of the sample was calculated as well and the Table 2 and 3 results came up.

TABLE 2
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF LEARNER AUTONOMY AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY SCORES

variables	Mean	N	S. D.	Std. error Mean
English proficiency	15.04	30	2.02	1.33
Learner autonomy	78.48	30	0.78	.69

TABLE 3
CORRELATION BETWEEN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND LEARNER AUTONOMY

variables	N	Correlation	Sig. (2 tailed)
English proficiency & learner autonomy	30	.402	.000

As shown in Table 3, regarding the significant level's being p=.000 and significantly smaller than the criterion (p<.05) the correlation coefficient indicates that learners' autonomy and the English proficiency of the participants are positively correlated. That is, the more proficient a learner is, the more autonomous they would be with the sample's high proficiency students' being more autonomous and the low proficiency students being the other way round.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper explored autonomy in language learning by examining its definition, followed by how different perspectives have affected its implementations. Several views to the concept of autonomy plus the hierarchies and

categorizations available in the literature were reviewed. Further, the focus of the very research was addressed as to what the relation between autonomy and language proficiency is.

Benson (2001) specifies six approaches to reach the goal of autonomy; resource-based approaches, technology-based approaches, learner-based approaches, classroom-based approaches, curriculum-based approaches, and teacher-based approaches. Drawing on the data collected in this very study, it is assumed that the best approaches which are capable of initiating a change in the current education are learner-based and teacher-based approaches which emphasize the direct production of behavioral and psychological changes in the learner and the role of the teacher and teacher education in the practice of fostering autonomy among learners respectively.

Iranian high school students seem to perform differently when it comes to English learning and based on the qualitative and quantitative data gathered on this study, Dornyei's (2001) suggested changes for an autonomy-supporting classroom seem to be the best way out of our sluggish high school English classes which are regarded as not useful and worth the invested time; an increase in learner involvement through project works, giving students positions of genuine authority, and letting them go through self-assessment, plus a major change in teacher's role in a way to make more room for the autonomous behaviors of learners to emerge.

<div align="center">REFERENCES</div>

[1]   Benson, P. (2001). Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning. Harlow: Longman.
[2]   Cheng, H. F., & Dŏrnyei, Z. (2007). The use of motivational strategies in language instruction: the case of EFL teaching in Taiwan. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 1*, 153-174. doi:10.2167/illt048.0.
[3]   Cotterall, S. and Crabbe, D. (1999). Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Defining the Field and the Effecting Change. Berlin: Peter Lang.
[4]   Cotterall, S. (2008). Autonomy and good language learners. In C. Griffiths. (Ed.), *Lessons from good language learners* (pp. 110-120). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[5]   Creswell, J. W., Vicki, L., & Clark, P. (2011). Designing and conducting mixed methods research (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
[6]   Dam, L. (1995). Learner Autonomy 3: from Theory to Classroom Practice. Dublin: Authentik.
[7]   Dam, L. (2011). Developing learner autonomy with school kids: Principles, practices, results. In D. Gardner (Ed.), *Fostering autonomy in language learning* (pp. 40-52). Gaziantep: Zirve University.
[8]   Dickinson, L. (1995). Autonomy and motivation: A literature review. *System*, *23*(2), 165-174. . doi:10.1016/0346-251X(95)00005-5.
[9]   Dislen, G. (2011). Exploration of How Students Perceive Autonomous Learning in an EFL Context. In D. Gardner (Ed.), *Fostering autonomy in language learning* (pp. 126-136). Gaziantep: Zirve University.
[10]   Gardner, D and Miller, L. (1999). Establishing Self-Access: From Theory To Practice. Cambridge: CUP.
[11]   Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. A. (1986). Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal, 70*(2), pp. 125-132. doi:10.2307/327317.
[12]   Holliday, A. (2007). Autonomy and cultural chauvinism. Retrieved from www.learnerautonomy.org/holliday2007.pdf.
[13]   Legenhausen, L. (2011). The place of grammar in an autonomous classroom: Issues and research results. In D. Gardner (Ed.), *Fostering autonomy in language learning* (pp. 27-39). Gaziantep: Zirve University.
[14]   Little, D. (1990). Autonomy in Language Learning. In I. Gathercole (Ed.), *Autonomy in Language Learning* (pp. 7-15). London: CILT.
[15]   Little, D. (1995). Learning as dialogue: The dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy. *System, 23*(2), 175-181. doi: 0346-251X(95)00006-2
[16]   Little, D. (2007). Language learner autonomy: some fundamental considerations revisited. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 1*, 14-29. doi:10.2167/illt040.0.
[17]   Littlewood, W. (1999). Defining and developing autonomy in East Asian contexts. *Applied Linguistics*, *20*(1), 71-94. doi:10.1093/applin/20.1.71.
[18]   Mahdavinia, M., & nabatchi Ahmadi, L. (2011).portfolio assessment: A tool for self-directed learning at post-secondary level. In D. Gardner (Ed.), *Fostering autonomy in language learning* (pp. 76-90). Gaziantep: Zirve University.
[19]   Nakata, Y. (2011). Teachers' readiness for promoting learner autonomy: A study of Japanese EFL high school teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*, 900-910. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2011.03.001.
[20]   Onozawa, C. (2010). Promoting autonomy in the language class: How autonomy can be applied in the language class? Retrieved from www.kyoai.ac.jp/college/ronshuu/no-10/onozawa1.pdf
[21]   Oxford, R. (2003). Toward a more systematic model of L2 learner autonomy. In D. Palferyman & R. Smith (Eds.), *Learner autonomy across cultures: Language education perspective* (pp. 75-91). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
[22]   Rivers, W. (2001). Autonomy at all costs: An ethnography of metacognitive self-assessment and self-management among experienced language learners. *Modern Language Journal, 85*(2), 279-290. doi:10.1111/0026-7902.00109.
[23]   Sedaghat, M., & Rahimi, S. (2011). A review of approaches to teaching thinking: Appropriate approach for Iran education system. *Social and behavioral Sciences, 30*, 1037-1042. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.10.202.
[24]   Shabani, H. (1995). Effects of problem-solving technique as teamwork on critical thinking and academic achievement of fourth grade elementary students in Tehran. Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Tarbiat Modares University. [In Persian]
[25]   Spratt, M., Humphreys, G., & Chan, V. (2002). Autonomy and motivation: which comes first? *Language Teaching Research, 6*, 245-266. doi:10.1191/1362168802lr106oa.
[26]   Ur, P. (1999). A course in language teaching: Practice and theory. Cambridge: CUP.

[27] Vickers, C.H., & Ene, E. (2006). Grammatical accuracy and learner autonomy in advanced writing. *ELT Journal, 60*(2), 109-116. . doi:10.1093/elt/cci097.

[28] Yazdan panah, A. (2007). Designing curriculum pattern to develop thinking dispositions of students. Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Tarbiat Modares University. [In Persian]

Parisa Mohamadpour is currently a PhD student at Azad University, Science & Research Branch, Tehran, Iran. She received her MA degree from Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran in 2008. Her primary research interests are second language acquisition, individual differences and teacher education.