

## **Investigating autonomy of Malaysian ESL learners: A comparison between public and private universities**

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### **Abstract**

The concept of autonomy in the context of language education in Europe had focused on the importance of personal autonomy. It was only recently that cultural influences were taken into consideration in interpreting autonomy. Studies on undergraduates learning ESL (English as a Second Language) in public universities in Malaysia revealed that the students were basically teacher-centred and lacked personal autonomy. These findings are in line with research findings from many other Asian contexts. This study investigated whether this phenomenon applied to students at a private university in Malaysia. A quantitative approach in the form of questionnaires was used in this study. The findings revealed that generally learners from both public and private universities preferred a more teacher-centred approach. However, although the majority of the students from the three public universities still maintained this position in their choice of strategies in learning, the students in the private university seemed to have moved towards a more autonomous position.

**Keywords:** Learner autonomy; independent learners; teacher-centeredness; socio-cultural differences; second language learners

### **Introduction**

Learner autonomy in language education has been interpreted in various ways. ‘Learner autonomy’, ‘learner independence’, ‘self direction’, ‘autonomous learning’ and other similar terms have been used to refer to learner autonomy. Benson (1997) proposes three major categorizations of learner autonomy for language learning,

namely technical, psychological and political. His first category, a technical perspective emphasizes skills or strategies for unsupervised learning. These include specific kinds of activity or process such as 'metacognitive', 'cognitive', 'social' and other strategies identified by Oxford (1990). This perspective would emphasise the development of strategies for effective learning and would focus, in the narrow sense, on learner training (Wenden, 1991; Oxford, 1990). His second category, a 'psychological' perspective emphasizes broader attitudes and cognitive abilities which enable the learner to take responsibility for his/her own learning. This perspective would suggest the fostering of more general dispositions and capacities. Holec's definition of autonomy would fall into this category. Holec (1981) defines autonomy as accepting responsibility for one's own learning which includes planning for learning, being innovative in the learning process, and being able to evaluate that learning. This means possessing affective/motivational and metacognitive dimensions and presupposing a positive attitude to the purpose, content and process of learning and possessing well-developed metacognitive skills.

In the Malaysian context, Thang (2001, 2005) found these qualities lacking in undergraduates learning ESL (English as a Second Language) in UKM. Follow-up studies undertaken by Thang & Azarina (2007) on three public universities in Malaysia came up with similar findings. However, the findings of all these studies revealed that although these learners were teacher-centred, they did possess characteristics that pointed to an ability to learn English autonomously. This finding is in line with research findings from many other Asian contexts. This study went a step further by comparing autonomy of Malaysian undergraduates of the three public universities investigated by Thang and Azarina (2007) with those of a private university.

### **Studies on learning characteristics**

Studies on Hong Kong learners have suggested a general pattern of typical Hong Kong Chinese learner. Hong Kong learners were reported to be inclined to favour rote learning over creative learning, be dependent on the syllabus, lack intellectual initiative, be passive, reticent, and reluctant to openly challenge authority especially teachers

(Pierson, 1996). Murphy (1987) pointed out that Hong Kong students displayed unquestioning acceptance of the knowledge of the teacher or lecturer instead of an expression of opinion, independence, self-mastery, creativity and all-around personal development.

In addition, an investigation of Hong Kong immigrant children in Canadian schools by Chan and Hui (1974) indicated that the Chinese students were very polite, but more quiet and shy than other students. Pierson (1996) further found them to be submissive to their teacher and did not challenge him/her sufficiently. In short, Hong Kong learners seem to exhibit a general pattern of being less autonomous (in the Western sense), having less initiative and needing to be told what to do.

On the other hand, a case study carried out by Intratat (2004) in Thailand to investigate teachers' and students' attitudes towards using CALL in promoting learner autonomy revealed that both teachers and learners appreciated the advantages offered by CALL and had positive attitudes towards learner autonomy and rated the most autonomous method as the best method. Although some teachers showed a preference for the teacher-centred approach, very few students agreed with this and the difference between these two groups were found to be significant. Vanijdee's (2003) findings on Thai English distance learners supported that of Intratat's. She found the students to display varying degrees of learner autonomy and to be generally "self-sufficient". Dickinson (1996) and Tantiswetrat & Chonguphajaisiddhu (1996) also supported the above findings suggesting that Thai students seemed to conform more to the Western concept of autonomy than students in Hong Kong and Malaysia. The scenario in Taiwan appeared to be similar to that of Hong Kong and Malaysia too. Hsu (2005) observed that in Taiwan, learner autonomy has been associated with the concepts of effort, strict discipline and willpower due to emphasis on rote learning in traditional Imperial Examinations and has moved away from Confucian's concept of the "ideal learner" as a critical and constructive scholar actively seeking new knowledge on his own initiative.

In the Malaysian context, not many studies have been conducted on learners' characteristics. Nevertheless, there are studies that explored distance learners' abilities to adapt to the distance learning mode in the Malaysian context that are worth considering. Saw et al. (1999)

investigated the adult educational transition among East Malaysian distance learners of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and found evidence that indicated that distance learners were able to adapt and accommodate the disruption of distance learning to other elements of their lives.

Similarly, another research undertaken by Atan et al. (2003) discovered that distance learners displayed positive and significant changes in their self-confidence and adapted well to the learning styles demanded by the distance education programme. They also made appropriate adjustments towards the demands of the new learning environment, leading to the building up of confidence and success in their studies. In addition, they developed required skills in terms of management of their time and critical thinking. The study used a questionnaire formulated by Lauzon (1989) and refined by Saw et al. (1999), Idrus et al. (2001) and Azli et al. (2000). In Atan et al.'s study the skills were reduced to **45 items under the category of study skills, recreation, health, finances, and religion**. It was conducted on distance learners of three universities (i.e. MARA University of Technology, the National University of Malaysia and University of Malaya). A comparison of mean scores using T-tests was used to analyse the results. These two studies were undertaken on learning of content courses.

Thang (2001) studied Malaysian distance learners' conceptions of their learning of English. Her study was undertaken in UKM, one of the eight public universities in Malaysia, and the respondents were the first- and second-year distance learners who had just completed their first English Proficiency Course. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. A comparison of mean scores using ANOVA and exploratory factor analysis were used to analyse the quantitative data and the qualitative data were analysed by identifying themes. Her study revealed that distance-learning undergraduates displayed a lack of autonomy and awareness of language learning processes in their learning of English as a Second Language (ESL). This study on the distance learning of English in UKM found no such adaptive and accommodative abilities as concluded by Atan et al. (2003). Instead Thang (2001) found that the distance-learning students were not able to cope with their English courses and complained of little

improvement in their English proficiency level. Thus, it appears that Malaysian distance learners encounter more problems learning English than content courses. The findings of a follow-up study on on-campus undergraduates of the same university using the same research methods (Thang, 2009) revealed similar findings. So did a follow-up study comparing the autonomy of undergraduates of three public universities (Thang and Azarina, 2007).

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

A comparative approach was used and data obtained from Thang & Azarina (2007) were compared to the data of the private university chosen in this study. The research methodology used in this study was similar to that of Thang & Azarina (2007).

### **Research Instrument**

A quantitative approach was used in this study. A Questionnaire was used in the collection of data for this research. This questionnaire is part of a 92-item questionnaire designed by a team of researchers working on an IRPA project (under the Intensified Research Priorities Areas scheme funded by the Malaysia Ministry of Science and Technology, 2002). The items in the Questionnaire describe characteristics commonly associated with what would be described as the ‘western’ concept of learner autonomy. They do not take into account sociocultural differences of learning contexts. It is used in this study as a yardstick to measure where the Malaysian learners stand with regard to the ‘western’ concept of autonomy. The items in the questionnaire can be classified under three categories as described below.

Category 1 : 18 items designed to find out to what extent the students are inclined towards teacher-centeredness.

These items deal with learners’ reliance and dependence on teachers. They describe the roles of the teacher as the source of information and the central figure in the learning processes. The items look more into learners’ inclination, i.e. whether they are more inclined towards teacher-centeredness or independent learning.

Category 2 : 18 items designed to find out to what extent the students are inclined towards autonomous learning.

These items highlight the learners' ability to be independent and responsible learners. They describe the learners as active individuals who want to take charge of the learning process and determine what they want and how they want to learn. These items are indicators of autonomous learning.

Category 3 : 8 items designed to find out to what extent the students are computer literate.

These items explore learners' ability to use computers and how they feel towards the use of computer technology in learning. Appendix 1 displays the complete list of items according to categories.

The Likert scale (comprising 4 for "Strongly agree", 3 for "Agree", 2 for "Disagree" and 1 for "Strongly disagree") was used to score the items. These items were randomly ordered. The questionnaires were translated into Bahasa Malaysia (the Malay language) to avoid the subjects' failure to understand and respond appropriately due to difficulty in comprehending the questions.

### **Sample population**

The sample population of this study comprised undergraduates of a private university in Malaysia that is, University Tunku Abdul Rahman (UniTAR). The data from this group of undergraduates were compared to the data of the undergraduates from three public universities namely UKM, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and University Terbuka Malaysia (OUM), derived from Thang & Azarina (2007). Table 1 displays the distribution of respondents from the four universities.

**TABLE 1: Distribution of respondents according to universities and races**

Universities	Ethnic groups				Total
	Malays	Chinese	Indians	Others	
UKM	156	83	6	10	255
UPM	245	28	12	14	299
OUM	147	12	28	15	202
UniTAR	1	56	4	0	61

**TABLE 2: Distribution of respondents according to universities and disciplines**

Universities	Faculties				Total
	Soc.Sc	Science	Business	Unknown	
UKM	97	68	87	3	255
UPM	128	114	46	11	299
OUM	17	173	5	7	202
UniTAR	0	61	0	0	61

**TABLE 3: Distribution of respondents according to disciplines and proficiency levels**

Universities	MUET				Total
	HP (Bands 5-6)	AP (Band 3-4)	LP (Band 1-2)	Missing	
UKM	11	141	86	17	255
UPM	2	14	229	54	299
OUM	8	15	5	174	202
UniTAR	12	13	4	32	61

The students from UKM, UPM and OUM were drawn from three different faculties; Social Sciences, Economics and Sciences. The students from UniTAR were all Science students and the sample population was much smaller. In addition, the students of UKM, UPM and OUM consisted of a fairly good mix of students from the three different ethnic groups (as seen in Table 1) though the population of Malay students was much higher than the two other racial groups which was a reflection of student population in public universities. In contrast, the students from UniTAR were mainly Chinese, which was also a reflection of the student population in this university.

On the students' level of proficiency, reference was made to their scores in the Malaysian University Entrance Test (MUET). The majority of UKM students were of average proficiency (AP) levels (with MUET bands 3 and 4) whereas those of UPM were of low proficiency (LP) level (with MUET bands 1 and 2). The number of OUM students that entered their MUET scores was too small to be worth considering. As for the UniTAR students, only about 50% of the students entered their MUET scores. The 50% were roughly divided between high (HP) (with MUET bands 5 and 6) and average proficiency (AP). These differences might be problematic except that Azarina (2006) found that differences in faculties, ethnic groups and proficiency levels had no significant effect on the extent of autonomy of students of UKM, UPM and OUM and that would be the assumption adopted in this study. In view of that, variations in faculties, ethnic origins and proficiency levels were not taken into consideration in this study. More importantly, since the sample population of the UniTAR students was small, it was not possible to consider these variables. This would be acknowledged as a limitation of this study. Further studies on large sample population should be taken to verify the validity of this study.

### **Procedures for data collection**

The questionnaires for the first-year undergraduates of UniTAR were also distributed by their English language instructors (as was done in Thang and Azarina(2007). They were allowed to take the questionnaires home and respond to them during their free time. All the students completed the questionnaires and returned them to their language instructors during their following lesson.



**Methods for analysing data**

The methods for analysing data involved item analysis and factor analysis.

**Item analysis**

An item analysis was carried out not for the intention of ascribing a preference for a particular learning modality (proposed in a single question) as constituting in itself a learning style, as that would be over-presumptuous (Willing 1998) but to identify some general trends to enable a better understanding of how learners respond to each item individually.

**Factor Analysis**

Exploratory factor analysis was used to look for sets of responses which have a high correlation with each other. The 'factor analysis' procedure was adopted from Willing's study (1988). This procedure was used to identify sets of responses, which had a high correlation with each other. The procedure involved was purely mathematical, that is, there was no preconceived pattern which the analysis was attempting to find. Instead, it sorted through the possible combinations or responses across all cases studied in order to discover whether there were any combinations of questions whose response-levels consistently tended to move in parallel. If such a set or sets were discovered in the data for this survey, it would then be necessary to examine the particular issues involved, in order to see whether those sets appeared to have any coherent 'meaning' in them. Then, the mean score of each subject's response to the items listed in each factor was calculated. The factor that yielded the highest mean score was then considered the predominant pattern of preference of that person. The characteristics of each 'group' were then studied.

The internal consistency of the items in each factor established for the respective institutions was checked using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. The items in each factor would be considered reliable if the reading established was above 0.7. Finally, frequency counts were used to measure the distribution of respondents from the three different universities according to factor groupings.

## Analysis of Data

### Item Analysis

The Likert scale (comprising 4 for strongly agree, 3 for agree, 2 for disagree and 1 for strongly disagree) was used to score the items. The ranking of the mean scores of the students from UniTAR was compared to the three public universities. Table 2 shows the five items that had the highest mean scores and Table 3 shows the five items that have the lowest mean scores.

**TABLE 2: Items with the highest mean scores  
for UKM, UPM, OUM and UniTAR**

Items	UKM	UPM	OUM	UniTAR
41. I like teachers who vary their teaching styles to meet our learning needs.	3.51	3.48	3.43	3.34
46. I think teachers should make us aware of the strategies that can be used to learn English more effectively.	3.50	3.48	3.31	3.26
91. I think it is important for English teachers to motivate us.	3.37	3.46	3.40	3.28
49. I feel it is important to read widely on my academic coursework.	3.38		3.25	
52. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes.		3.35	3.24	3.28
60. I need a lot of guidance in my learning.	3.34	3.41		
71. I like teachers who correct all my mistakes.				3.20

**TABLE 3: Items with the lowest mean scores for UKM, UPM and OUM**

	<b>Items</b>	<b>UKM</b>	<b>UPM</b>	<b>OUM</b>	<b>UniTAR</b>
40.	I feel uncomfortable in the learning laboratory.	2.31	2.39	2.30	2.16
59.	I feel that the method used by my teacher inhibits my learning style.	2.07	2.14	2.35	2.26
55.	I only need my lecture and tutorial notes.	2.07	2.22	2.30	2.20
43.	I do not enjoy studying using the computer.	1.96	1.98	1.97	2.26
72.	I dislike being directed on how to learn.			2.43	
79.	Students should be encouraged to challenge their teachers.	2.30	2.23		
68.	I like the teacher that follows the text closely.				2.30

The rankings for UniTAR were similar to those of the other three institutions in that generally the items having the highest mean scores were those related to the teacher-centred learning mode and those with the lowest mean scores were those related to autonomous learning. Thus, the rankings suggest a general preference for the teacher-centred mode of learning among all students irrespective of whether they were on-campus or distance learners or whether they were students from public or private universities.

### **Factor Analysis**

Exploratory factor analysis was also carried out on the students from UniTAR. Principal component factor analysis of all items was carried out using SPSS 14.0 programme. The varimax R (orthogonal) rotation and Kaiser normalization procedure were used for this purpose. Following

the study by Thang & Azarina (2007), the principal component factor analysis procedures were carried out to extract two factors. The factor solutions obtained accounted for 26.6% of explained variance for UKM, 30.7% for UPM and 31.7% for OUM. For UniTAR, the factor solutions accounted for 29.03% of the explained variance. To decrease cross-loadings and to increase efficiency, all items that loaded below 0.3 were deleted. In cases where there were cross-loadings of items between factors, the lower loadings were automatically deleted. Finally, any loading of below 0.4 was deleted.

### **Description of factors of UKM, UPM and OUM students**

Thang and Azarina (2007) described the two main factors of UKM, UPM and OUM as representing two types of learning preferences. Factor 1 was described as the “Teacher-centred group” as it had predominant features of teacher-centred learning whereas Factor 2 was classified as “Autonomous group” as it had predominant features of autonomous learning. (See Appendix IIA for the common characteristics of Factor 1, Appendix IIB for the variations in characteristics of Factor 1, Appendix IIIA for the common characteristics of Factor 2, and Appendix IIIB for the variations in characteristics of Factor 2 of their study).

Based on an analysis of the common characteristics of the three institutions, the Teacher-centred group was described as relying on the teachers to explain everything to them and guide them in their learning. In addition, these students were inclined to view the teachers as the resource and feeder to point out and correct their mistakes and to give them feedback on their work. However, it was pointed out that this group did indicate the desire to be responsible and independent in their own learning processes. This was expressed in their desire to learn about the purposes behind activities given, to read widely on academic work, to be taught the correct language learning strategies and for teachers to vary their teaching styles to meet their learning needs. A significant difference that was highlighted was that OUM students seemed to be slightly more independent than the other two groups as they indicated that they conducted a lot of research using the Internet.

Learners of the Autonomous group were described as possessing strong characteristics of autonomous learners. They indicated the desire for freedom to employ their own learning styles and showed

a preference for peer evaluation in enhancing their language ability. However, variations in characteristics of Factor 2 demonstrated that they leaned towards semi-autonomy suggesting the students' desires to move towards greater autonomy with the support and guidance of teachers. The findings further showed UPM and OUM students possessing more characteristics leaning towards total autonomy. Hence, it would appear that UKM students were the least autonomous group. The internal consistency of both their factors/groups for each institution was above 0.7, which confirmed the reliability of classification.

Following that a frequency count was undertaken on the number of students belonging to the Teacher-centered group and the Autonomous group. The data showed that a majority of the learners in the three universities preferred teacher-centred learning as opposed to autonomous learning. However, there was a marginal difference of about 8% between OUM and the other two institutions. Similarly, OUM had the highest percentage of autonomous learning (14.4%), followed by UKM and UPM (12.5% and 12.4% respectively). These findings confirmed the earlier claim that UKM students seemed to be the most teacher-centred and OUM students the least teacher-centred.

### **Description of factors of UniTAR students**

Two factors were also identified from the factor analysis for UniTAR. The factors also generally represent two types of learning preferences. However, in this case, Factor 1/Group 1 seemed to show a good combination of autonomous learning and teacher-centred characteristics. The interesting thing to note is that the teacher-centred characteristics seemed to lean towards semi-autonomy. In view of this, this group was named the Proautonomous learning group. On the other hand, items in Factor1Group 2 were those that inclined towards teacher-centredness except item 73. Thus, this group was named the Teacher-centred group (see Table 4 & 5).

**TABLE 4: Characteristics of Factor 1 present in UniTAR**

<b>Factor 1: Proautonomous learning group</b>	
<b>Items</b>	
<b>Autonomous learning</b>	
49.	I feel it is important to read widely on my academic coursework.
57.	I think it is important for us to learn about the purposes behind the activities given.
61.	I think teachers should empower us to be responsible for our own learning.
65.	I always take the initiative when learning about something.
79.	Students should be encouraged to challenge their teachers.
87.	I like the opportunity to self-correct minor mistakes.
90.	I would like more opportunity to learn on my own.
<b>Teacher-centered</b>	
41.	I like teachers who vary their teaching styles to meet our learning needs.
47.	I like the teacher to ask me to talk about my interests.
51.	I think that teachers should give opportunities to students to learn in their own learning styles.
53.	I think teachers should give students opportunities to decide where and how to learn.
60.	I need a lot of guidance in my learning.
71.	I like teachers who correct all my spoken mistakes.
75.	I like teachers who ask us to give our view in class.
78.	I like teachers to frequently point out my mistakes.
84.	I think teachers should consider our cultural background in designing lessons.
89.	I think teachers should give us less homework and allow us to do our work in class.
91.	I think it is important for English teachers to motivate us.

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**Computer literacy**

- 50. I conduct a lot of research using the internet.
  - 56. I believe it is important to have language laboratory sessions.
  - 62. I wish I were given some opportunities to learn English through using the computer.
  - 86. I think on-line learning should be included in English classes.
  - 92. I think audio-visual aids should be used frequently in English classes.
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**TABLE 5: Characteristics of Factor 2 present in UniTAR**

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**Factor 2: Teacher-centred group**

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**Teacher-centered**

- 38. I like the teacher to explain everything to us.
- 46. I think teachers should allow students to use a multilingual dictionary in class.
- 63. I like teachers who use a lot of their own materials in classes.
- 82. I think it is important for teachers to give us regular feedback on our work.
- 73. I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own.
- 55. I only need my lectures and tutorials notes. (negative)
- 59. I feel the method used by my teacher inhibits my learning style. (negative)
- 68. I like teachers who follow the text closely. (negative)
- 72. I dislike being directed on how to learn. (negative)

**Computer literacy**

- 40. I feel uncomfortable in the learning laboratory.
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The Proautonomous group can be described as a balanced group. These learners still retained characteristics of teacher-centred which could be characteristics they acquired from the very teacher-centred

of education used in Malaysia. However, most of the teacher-centred characteristics they retained were those associated with semi autonomy which showed they had moved away from their teachers. More importantly, it was evident that they had broken away from the norm in adopting characteristics that were associated with greater autonomy.

Group 2, a smaller group, was basically very teacher-centred. This group still clung on to teacher-centred characteristics. Very strong teacher-centred characteristics were items 38, 59, 68, 72, and 82. Only items 46, 55 63, and 73 could be considered as semi-autonomous characteristics.

### **Reliability analysis**

Before proceeding any further, it is important to check the internal consistency of the items in each factor/group. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was used for this purpose. The Alpha value for Factor 1/Group 1 (the Proautonomous group) was 0.917 and the Alpha value for Factor 2/Group 2 (the teacher-centred group) was 0.799. The internal consistency of both factors/groups was above 0.7 which confirmed the reliability of classification of the factors/groups.

### **Frequency Analysis**

A frequency count of the number of students belonging to the Proautonomous Learning group and the Teacher-centred group was carried out. The comparison of the number and percentage of learners is shown in Table 6.

**TABLE 6: Comparison of learners according to groups**

<b>Group</b>	<b>UniTAR Number (%)</b>
Proautonomous Learning group (PaL group)	50 (81.8%)
Teacher-centred group (TC group)	11 (18.2%)



The data show that a majority of the learners from UniTAR preferred a more autonomous learning approach (81.8%) as opposed to a teacher-centred learning (18.2%).

### **Discussion of results**

The results suggest that generally learners from both the public and private universities preferred a more teacher-centred approach. They seemed to enjoy communicative-based learning but a majority of them preferred their teachers to be in-charge which included telling them their mistakes, guiding them and motivating them. This is, perhaps, a washback effect of the 'spoon-feed' system operating in most Malaysian primary and secondary schools.

Similar findings were found in research on Hong Kong Chinese learners who were reported to be passive, reticent, and reluctant to openly challenge authority, especially teachers. They were also dependent on the syllabus, lack intellectual initiative and prefer rote learning to creative learning (Murphy, 1987; Pierson, 1996). However, the most interesting and poignant finding of this study is that it would appear that although the majority of the students from the three public universities still maintained this position in their choice of strategies in learning, the students in the private university had managed to move to a more autonomous position and this is indeed a good sign.

### **Conclusion**

This study shows that although Asian students are more teacher-centred they are able to move away from that position if placed in an environment that requires them to do so which would seem to be the case in the private university and also in the case of students studying abroad. This reiterated Thang & Azarina's viewpoint (2007) that teacher-centredness may be influenced by the cultural values and mentality of Asians and does not necessary mean a lack of ability to learn autonomously. The findings of Spratt, Humphreys & Chan (2002) and Kennedy (2002) on Hong Kong students, Chia (2009) on People's Republic of China students (studying in Singapore) and McGrath, Sinclair & Chen (2009) on Chinese teachers in China supported this. They found that despite evidence of passiveness and teacher-centeredness, their participants

were all capable, willing and even eager to move to more autonomous position when appropriate support/ intervention was given to motivate and support them. The current study supports this stand.

Thus, it can be concluded that it is inaccurate to surmise that Malaysian learners do not have the capacity for autonomy just because they show a preference for the teacher-centred learning mode. As proposed by Sinclair & Thang (2009: 4), what is required is to develop “an extended definition of autonomy in language learning which accommodates its relativistic nature and the possibility of multiple interpretations (or constructions) based on differing social, cultural and political contexts”.

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Dr. Thang Siew Ming is an Associate Professor at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. She graduated with a PhD in Education from the University of Nottingham, UK in 2001. Her areas of interest are Learner Autonomy, Distance Education, CALL and Learning Styles and Strategies. She is the President of PacCALL and has chaired numerous CALL conferences. Currently, she is heading a research project that explores teaching and learning in smart schools in Malaysia. The product of the project will be an online CPD model that can be used for training Malaysian teachers and teachers in other contexts

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**Appendix I: Items used in the questionnaire  
according to categories**

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**Category : 18 items designed to find out to what extent the  
students are teacher-centered**

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38. I like the teacher to explain everything to us.
  41. I like teachers who vary their teaching styles to meet our learning needs.
  44. I like the teacher to give us tasks to work on.
  46. I think teachers should make us aware of the strategies that can be used to learn English more effectively.
  47. I like the teacher to ask me to talk about my interests.
  52. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes.
  60. I need a lot of guidance in my learning.
  63. I like teachers who use a lot of their own materials in classes.
  66. I believe it is necessary to have formal teaching to learn English.
  68. I like teachers who follow the text closely.
  71. I like teachers who correct all my spoken mistakes.
  75. I like teachers who ask us to give our views in class.
  78. I like teachers to frequently point out my mistakes.
  81. I do not have adequate management skills to learn on my own.
  82. I think it is important for teachers to give us regular feedback on our work.
  84. I think teachers should consider our cultural backgrounds in designing lessons.
  89. I think teachers should give us less homework and allow us to do our work in class.
  91. I think it is important for English teachers to motivate us.
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**Category 2 : 18 items designed to find out to what extent the students are autonomous in their learning**

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42. I think teachers should give us opportunities to select the units we like to learn.
  49. I feel it is important to read widely on my academic coursework.
  51. I think that teachers should give opportunities to students to learn in their own learning styles.
  53. I think teachers should give students opportunities to decide where and how to learn.
  55. I only need my lecture and tutorial notes.
  57. I think it is important for us to learn about the purposes behind the activities given.
  59. I feel that the method used by my teacher inhibits my learning style.
  61. I think teachers should empower us to be responsible for our own learning.
  65. I always take the initiative when learning about something.
  69. I know my learning style and use it effectively.
  72. I dislike being directed on how to learn.
  73. I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own.
  76. I like the opportunity to correct my classmates' mistakes.
  79. Students should be encouraged to challenge their teachers.
  83. I like my friends to check my work.
  85. I think teachers should allow us to learn at our own pace.
  87. I like the opportunity to self-correct minor mistakes in my work.
  90. I would like more opportunities to learn on my own.
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**Category 3: 8 items designed to find out to what extent the students are computer literate**

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- 40. I feel uncomfortable in the learning laboratory.
  - 43. I do not enjoy studying using the computer.
  - 50. I conduct a lot of research using the internet.
  - 56. I believe it is important to have language laboratory sessions.
  - 62. I wish I were given some opportunities to learn English through using the computer.
  - 80. I believe that some English classes can be conducted more effectively in a multimedia laboratory.
  - 86. I think on-line learning should be included in English classes.
  - 92. I think audio-visual aids should be used frequently in English classes.
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**Appendix IIA: Common characteristics of Factor  
1 present in the three institutions**

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**Factor 1: Teacher-centred group**

**Items**

**Autonomous learning**

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- 49. I feel it is important to read widely on my academic coursework.
- 57. I think it is important for us to learn about the purposes behind the activities given.
- 61. I think teachers should empower us to be responsible for our own learning.

**Teacher-centered**

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- 38. I like the teacher to explain everything to us.
- 41. I like teachers who vary their teaching styles to meet our learning needs.
- 46. I think teachers should make us aware of the strategies that can be used to learn English more effectively.
- 52. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes.
- 60. I need a lot of guidance in my learning.
- 63. I like teachers who use a lot of their own materials in classes.
- 71. I like teachers who correct all my spoken mistakes.
- 78. I like teachers to frequently point out my mistakes.
- 82. I think it is important for teachers to give us regular feedback on our work.
- 91. I think it is important for English teachers to motivate us.

**Computer literacy**

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- 56. I believe it is important to have language laboratory sessions.
  - 92. I think audio-visual aids should be used frequently in English classes.
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**Appendix IIB: Variations in characteristics of  
Factor 1 present in the three institutions**

**Factor 1: Teacher-centered group**

Items	UKM	UPM	OUM
<b>Autonomous learning</b>			
65. I always take the initiative when learning about something.		√	√
76. I like the opportunity to correct my classmates' mistakes.		√	
87. I like the opportunity to self-correct minor mistakes in my work.		√	√
<b>Teacher-centredness</b>			
44. I like the teacher to give us tasks to work on.			√
47. I like the teacher to ask me to talk about my interests.		√	
55. I only need my lecture and tutorial notes. (neg)	√		
59. I feel that the method used by my teacher inhibits my learning style. (neg)	√		
66. I believe it is necessary to have formal teaching to learn English.			√
75. I like teachers who ask us to give our views in class.		√	
<b>Computer literacy</b>			
43. I do not enjoy studying using the computer. (neg)	√	√	
50. I conduct a lot of research using the internet.			√
62. I wish I were given some opportunities to learn English through using the computer.			√
80. I believe that some English classes can be conducted more effectively in a multimedia laboratory.		√	√
86. I think on-line learning should be included in English classes.		√	√

**Appendix IIIA: Common characteristics of  
Factor 2 present in the three institutions**

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**Factor 2: Autonomous group**

**Items**

**Autonomous learning**

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42. I think teachers should give us opportunities to select the units we like to learn.
  51. I think that teachers should give opportunities to students to learn in their own learning styles.
  53. I think teachers should give students opportunities to decide where and how to learn.
  69. I know my learning style and use it effectively.
  73. I like teachers who give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own.
  83. I like my friends to check my work.
  85. I think teachers should allow us to learn at our own pace.
  90. I would like more opportunities to learn on my own.
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**Appendix IIIB: Variations in characteristics of  
Factor 2 present in the three institutions**

**Factor 2: Autonomous group**

Items	UKM	UPM	OUM
<b>Autonomous learning</b>			
55. I only need my lecture and tutorial notes.		√	√
59. I feel that the method used by my teacher inhibits my learning style.		√	√
65. I always take the initiative when learning about something.	√		
72. I dislike being directed on how to learn.		√	√
76. I like the opportunity to correct my classmates' mistakes.	√		√
79. Students should be encouraged to challenge their teachers.		√	√
87. I like the opportunity to self-correct minor mistakes in my work.	√		
<b>Teacher-centredness</b>			
47. I like the teacher to ask me to talk about my interests.	√		
84. I think teachers should consider our cultural backgrounds in designing lessons.		√	√
<b>Computer literacy</b>			
50. I conduct a lot of research using the internet.	√		
80. I believe that some English classes can be conducted more effectively in a multimedia laboratory.	√		
86. I think on-line learning should be included in English classes.	√	√	