FOSTERING LANGUAGE LEARNER AUTONOMY
THROUGH THE INVOLVEMENT OF ICT: TEACHERS' PERCEPTION

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Abstract
Learner autonomy has become a key issue in promoting effective language teaching. Besides, ICT has contributed to the betterment of English language teaching. There is still limited research which focuses on investigating English teachers' perception on the use of ICT to promote learner autonomy. This study aimed to investigate the English teachers' perception of the involvement of ICT in promoting learner autonomy. A Qualitative research design was employed in this study. The data were collected through online questionnaires and interviews. Thirty English teachers were voluntarily involved to participate in this research. The results of the study revealed that the majority of the English teachers saw ICT as an opportunity for them to promote learner autonomy since it helped the students to be more independent and engaged with the lessons. Further research focusing on students' perspectives about learner autonomy was suggested to enrich the literature of language learner autonomy.

Keywords: ICT, learner autonomy, teachers' perception

Introduction

Learner autonomy has been considered as one of the pedagogical factors that play an important role in boosting the effectiveness of language teaching. Learner autonomy commonly defined as learners' ability to handle and program their learning (Holec, 1981; Benson, 2001). Besides, learner autonomy is considered to have a great emphasis on learners' role as independent learners who can take control over their learning (Duong, 2014). Learners' responsibility to manage their learning process should be fostered to train them to be more autonomous. In line with the idea that learner autonomy relates to the learners' responsibility for managing their learning, learner autonomy is also considered as a learning situation where an individual devotes attitude of responsibility and self-direction on their learning (Dickinson, 1987). Here, self-direction relates to the term of self-regulated learning as one type of learner autonomy.

In promoting learner autonomy, teachers must be aware of the characteristics of their students that can be categorized as an autonomous learner. Some characteristics of autonomous learners are methodological & disciplined, logical & analytical, reflective & self-aware, demonstrate curiosity & motivation, flexible, interdependent & interpersonally competent, persistent & responsible, venturesome & creative, show confidence & have a positive self-concept,

independent & self-sufficient, have developed information seeking & retrieval skills, have knowledge about & skill at learning process, and develop & use criteria for evaluating (Candy, 1991). It is not mandatory to obtain all of those characteristics, which mean that teachers may encourage the students to have only some of those characteristics like reflective, self-aware, creative, and demonstrate curiosity.

When teachers promote learner autonomy to their students, it is needed to know whether the students are already to be autonomous or not. This can be used as a signal to the teachers' selection of teaching strategies to promote learner autonomy. Thus, learners are potentially starting to act independently if they begin to accept responsibility for their learning, responsibility for decision making, and reflection on their learning (Little, Ridley & Ushioda, 2002). Concerning this situation, students' responsibility to take charge of their learning can be categorized into two terms; proactive autonomy and reactive autonomy. The former refers to the students' effort to regulate both the direction of activity and the activity itself while the latter refers to the efforts made by the students to regulate the activity once its direction is regulated by the teacher or any other guidance provider (Littlewood, 1999).

All the definitions and theories about learner autonomy above seem to have a big contribution to the success of promoting learner autonomy in which effective language learning is claimed as its main goal. The ideas instilled in learner autonomy drive the focus from teaching to learning through implementing self/peer assessment and self-regulated learning (Lacey, 2007). Besides, autonomy in language learning has been translated into the process of enabling learners to recognize & assess their own needs, to select & apply their learning styles of strategies which are leading to the effective management of learning (Penaflorida in Richards & Renandya, 2002).

However, learner autonomy has not quickly developed in the Indonesian educational context. Based on some study reports, Indonesia has not been promoting learner autonomy as the main goal of the learning process (Darsih, 2018). Besides, learner autonomy has not commonly been listed in the teaching-learning objective by Indonesian educational institutions (Lengkanawati, 2017). This fact is contradictory with the spirit of obtaining effective language learning since the learner autonomy is not pointed as the learning objective. This situation is getting worse when other factors also contribute to delimit the promotion of learner autonomy such as limited time, insufficient proficiency of English, lack of autonomous experience and too much focus on national examination emerge in the Indonesian educational context (Lengkanawati, 2017).

Meanwhile, the rapid development of technology brings new experiences in education. Technological development in education has also been associated with the demand for acquiring the 21st-century skills in which some of the skills are related to learner autonomy such as collaboration, creativity, and self-regulated learning. ICT which stands for information and communication technology has been adopted in schools and colleges in place of IT to wider the use of technology, not merely only for processing information but also for education matter (Rank, Chris & Trevor, 2011). Information technology in language classrooms boosts autonomous learning, maximizes targeted outcomes, motivates learners, and helps learners to improve their performance in the EFL

classrooms (Azmi, 2017). Besides, ICT is perceived as an important tool in improving performance, collaboration, learning experience, and learning outcomes (Albugami & Vian, 2015).

Teaching English through the involvement of technology such as a mobile multimedia learning system (MMLS) and a flipped classroom model can help the students to practice the language more, learning from other students (collaborative work), having better learning plan and monitoring & reflecting their learning (Shadiev, Hwang & Liu, 2018; Tsai, 2019). Some teaching practices can support autonomy, one of them is through a technology-based approach. It emphasizes learners' independent interaction towards educational technologies (Benson, 2001).

Furthermore, dealing with teaching practices, teachers may have understanding and experiences related to the promotion of learner autonomy. Their perception of learner autonomy and strategies for promoting learner autonomy should be considered. Perception refers to the people's cognitive process to know something through human sense by interpreting and understanding the world around them and it involves the awareness of people's beliefs about something (Chaplin, 1968; Gibson, 1985). The concept of perception is not only covering the people's interpretation of something but also involving their experiences. There are three dimensions of perceptions based on one's experience. They are understanding (knowledge about something), view (thinking about something), and action (something that people do) (Vernon, 1987).

Based on the background of the problem and the review of the literature above, this study aims to investigate teachers' perceptions towards the involvement of ICT (information, communication, and technology) to promote learner autonomy. This study deals with three research questions;
1) What is the teachers' understanding of learner autonomy?
2) What is the teachers' view on the involvement of ICT to promote learner autonomy?
3) What is the teachers' action towards the utilization of ICT to promote learner autonomy?

Method
Research design
Since this study aimed to explore the teachers' perception of the involvement of ICT to promote learner autonomy, the qualitative research design was chosen to be employed as the procedure in conducting this study. Qualitative research has the purpose to study about human life along with the social phenomenon where the descriptive data are rich, detailed, and dominant (Saldana, 2011; Mackey & Gass, 2005). In line with this idea, this study was expected to produce rich and detailed information about the teachers' perception of viewing the role of ICT for promoting learner autonomy. Besides, the deep interpretation of the collected data and the discussions were likely to be the most prominent results of this study that could contribute to the development of promoting learner autonomy for language learners.

Data collection

English teachers from several grades of junior high school, senior high school, and vocational high school were invited to be participants in this study. There were 30 English teachers who filled out the questionnaire and 6 of them were selected to be interviewed based on their willingness. The data collection including the online questionnaire distribution and the interview was conducted from 30 October – 11 November 2019.

This study used a questionnaire which was adapted from a questionnaire about teachers' beliefs towards learner autonomy suggested by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012). The adaptation is done to adjust with the goal of information sought in this study. The statements listed in the questionnaire were based on three aspects; teachers' understanding, teachers' view, and teachers' actions towards the involvement of ICT in promoting learner autonomy. The measurement was in the form of a Likert scale ranging from 1-4 which represents strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. There was no neutral option in this measurement to avoid unclear/bias information. The questionnaire was distributed through Google form which meant that the teachers could fill out the questionnaire in flexible time and location.

Moreover, a semi-structured interview was applied in this study. The interview guideline was designed before the researcher interviewed the participants and the questions also catered to three aspects of perception (teachers' understanding, teachers' view, and teachers' actions) as what had been included in the questionnaire.

Data analysis

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively by using descriptive statistics to calculate the frequency and the percentage of the data distribution. The calculation follows this formula.

$$\frac{\text{total score per questionnaire item}}{120} \times 100\%$$

Note: The maximum score is 120 if it is assumed that all respondents choose SA (4 x 30 = 120). Thus, the results of the calculation can be categorized as follows.
Strongly Disagree (SD)   = 1% – 25%   Agree (A) `   = 51% – 75%
Disagree (D) `   = 26% – 50% Strongly Agree (SA) = 76% – 100%

Meanwhile, the data from the interview were analyzed qualitatively by reading all data thoroughly, coding the data, interrelating with the description, and interpreting the description (Creswell, 2014). Thus, the data recapitulation from the questionnaire and interview would be interpreted based on the concept of perception (understanding, view, and action) in accordance with the research questions.

Findings and Discussion
The participants' profile

The researcher involved 30 English teachers to be the respondents for filling out the questionnaire. The respondents were various since they came from

different gender, different types of school (junior high school, senior high school and vocational high school) and different years of teaching experiences. Meanwhile, all of them had been holding a bachelor's degree which met the minimum educational background required for teaching in secondary schools in Indonesia. The respondents' profile is presented in Figure 1.
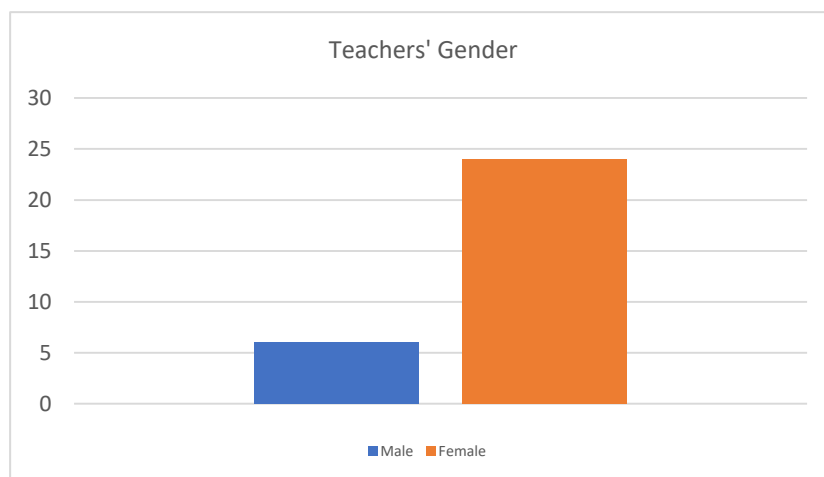

Figure 1. Profile of respondents based on gender

Most of the teachers are female. There were 24 female teachers and 6 male teachers. Then, move to the school/institution's background. The data are more varied as presented in Figure 2.
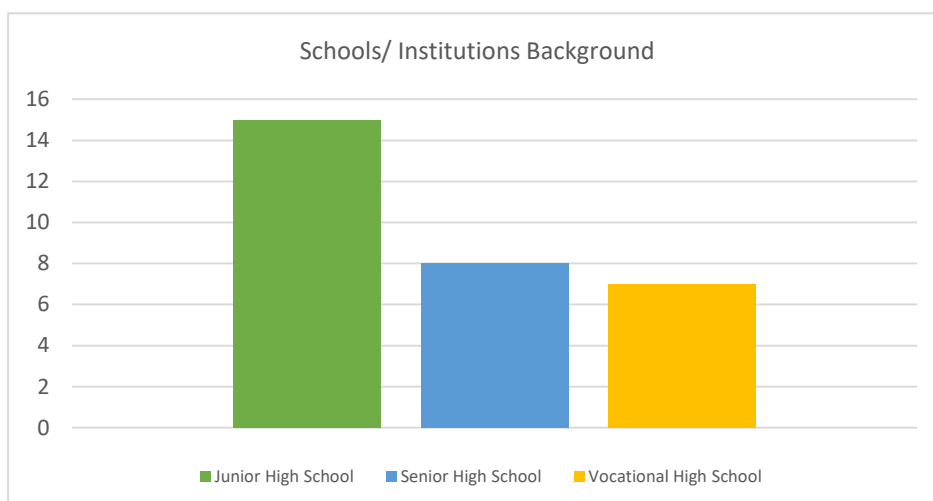

Figure 2. Profile of respondents based on schools/ institutions backgrounds.

Based on the chart above, most of the teachers came from junior high school. There were 15 teachers from junior high school, 8 teachers from senior high

school and 7 teachers from vocational high school. Next, the teachers' educational background is presented in Figure 3.
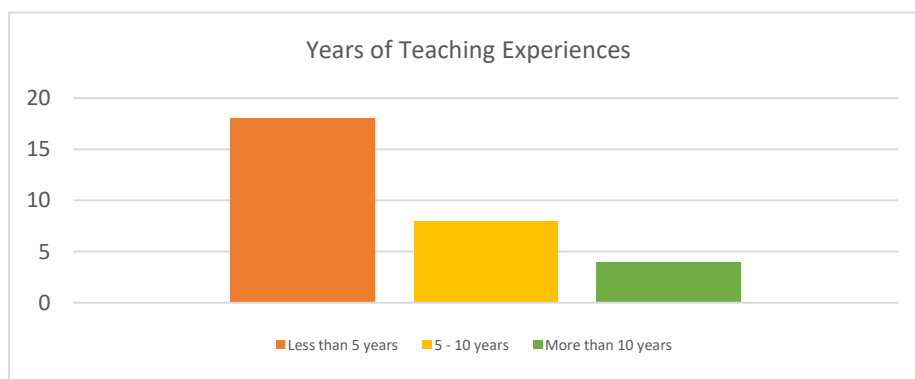

Figure 3. Profile of respondents based on educational background.

From the chart above, mostly the teachers had been working for less than 5 years. There were 18 teachers who belonged to this. They can be categorized as novice teachers but commonly they were more familiar with the technology or ICT. Then, 8 teachers had been working for 5 until 10 years. They are more experienced than novice teachers. Lastly, 4 senior teachers were involved in this study. Although they were not as good as the novice teachers in terms of using ICT, they had more experiences in teaching and stronger principles of teaching.

From the 30 respondents, the researcher selected 6 of them to be the interviewee based on their willingness. Dworkin (2012) states that many articles and book chapters and books suggest that 5 to 50 participants involved in the interview are adequate. So, it can be said that the number of participants involved in this interview already meets the minimum requirement. The participants were 2 junior high school English teachers, 2 senior high school English teachers, and 2 vocational high school English teachers. Three of them had been working for 5-10 years while the rest had been working for less than 5 years.

Teachers' understanding of learner autonomy

Based on the data processing of the questionnaire, it can be obtained the summary of participants' responses. Table 1 below presents the result of the questionnaire on teachers' understanding of learner autonomy.

Table 1. Teachers' understanding of learner autonomy.

No.	Statements	Percentage
1.	Learner autonomy for all ages.	65%
2.	Making choices in learning.	79%
3.	Effectively developed in the outside classroom learning.	77%
4.	Involving learners in decisions.	80%
5.	Learning how to learn.	80%
6.	Leaner autonomy for all cultural backgrounds.	80%
7.	Effective for confident language learners.	78%

8.	Not suitable for the teacher-centered classroom.	70%
9.	Suitable for learner-centered classrooms.	78%
10.	Having a positive effect on language learners.	82%

From the table above, it can be seen that all of the statements got more than 50%. It indicates that the majority of the participants have positive attitudes towards the concept of learner autonomy. There are some statements which have a high percentage (more than 75%). They are statements 2,3,4,5,6,7,9, and 10. Firstly, most of the participants agree with the statement that learners can make choices about how they learn (79%). Secondly, the participants believe that autonomy can develop most effectively outside the classroom (77%). Thirdly, the participants are sure that involving learners in making decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy (80%). Fourth, most of the participants agree with the idea that learning how to learn is the key to developing learner autonomy (80%). Fifth, the participants believe that learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds (80%). Sixth, the participants agree that confidence influences the process of developing learner autonomy (78%). Seventh, the participants also believe that learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy (78%). Lastly, the participants are sure that learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner (82%).

From Table 1 above, it can be concluded that most of the participants agree with each statement. However, two statements have a lower percentage although they are still above 50% which can be categorized as agree. The statements are number 1 and 8. This indicates that several participants are still unsure about the concept of the possibility of promoting learner autonomy to all ages and the concept that learner autonomy cannot be promoted in the teacher-centered classroom.

Moreover, based on the result of the interview with six English teachers, most of the teachers have a good understanding of the concept of learner autonomy. Mostly, they said that learner autonomy is a way of learners to make efforts for mastering the lesson independently. It can be seen from one of the interviewee's answers below.

> *"Based on my point of view, Learner autonomy is the students' effort to master the lesson autonomously during and after class. They have a strong willingness to comprehend the material given by the teacher. The students who are classified autonomous tend to be a success in learning"* [Interviewee 2].

Besides, the majority of the participants agreed that the promotion of learner autonomy is crucial. Learner autonomy decreases the *spoon-fed* learning situation in which the students rely much on their teacher. This is in line with the answer from one of the interviewees.

> *"I think a teacher should promote learner autonomy. It is necessary since many students still rely on the teacher as the source of learning. If the students depend only on the teacher, they will not be able to broaden their*

knowledge and they will not have rich experience in learning" [Interviewee 1].

Promoting learner autonomy is not only developing the students' autonomy but also developing their cognitive level. Three aspects of controlling in learner autonomy include control over learning management, control over the cognitive process, and control over learning content (Benson, 2001). Thus, effective learning management depends upon control of the cognitive process involved in learning, while control of cognitive processes itself necessarily has consequences for the self-management of learning (Dafei, 2007). Therefore, when the students think about how they should learn and what kind of materials that match their learning goals, it will develop their cognitive level in terms of learning management. This idea is supported by the interviewee's statement below.

" Learner autonomy will help the students to develop themselves such as cognitive level about the lesson given. The teachers have to try to promote learner autonomy since it will affect positively and I believe it's good for their future to apply in the next level of study" [Interviewee 2].

Learner autonomy also contributes to the development of students' critical thinking and decision-making skills. When they learn autonomously, it involves the process of think critically about the best way they need to do to learn and decide what learning activities that make them learn effectively. The competence to think critically is coextensive with the notion of autonomy and self-sufficiency. Thus, critical reflection, decision making, and independent actions also belong to the notion of autonomy (Raya, Lamb & Vieira, 2007; Little as cited in Pemberton & Nix, 2012). These skills are also relevant to this disruptive era where everybody should be more independent and creative.

"It is important to develop students' ability to think critically and make decisions in this disruption era. Student-centered learning is one of the ways that can be used to promote learner autonomy since this learning approach emphasizes on students' liveliness and initiative. The teachers are just to be the facilitator, guide and prompter and the students do the problem-solving by themselves" [Interviewee 4]

This statement also highlights that student-centered learning is the appropriate learning model for promoting learner autonomy since it emphasizes on students' activities. This will help the students to be more skilful in solving their learning problems. In connection to this idea, Jaiswal (2019) found that a learner-centered instructional approach could increase learners' retention (transfer of productive and receptive) of vocabulary in language learning and promote learner autonomy.

Teachers' view on the involvement of ICT to promote learner autonomy

The next discussion is about the teachers' view on the involvement of ICT to promote learner autonomy. Here, the statements of the questionnaire would explore teachers' opinions about promoting learner autonomy with ICT. Table 2 presents the result of questionnaire data processing.

Table 2. Teachers' view of using ICT to promote learner autonomy.

No.	Statements	Percentage
11.	Online resources for finding learning materials independently.	83%
12.	Social media for collaborative learning.	83%
13.	Web-based online resources enhance students' curiosity.	81%
14.	ICT presentation tools increase students' confidence.	83%
15.	E-learning increases students' flexibility in learning.	83%
16.	Apps or games can increase students' motivation.	81%
17.	Apps or games for evaluating learning progress.	76%
18.	LCD Projector for more independent presentations.	78%
19.	Online resources for choosing topics of learning.	83%
20.	Generation Z cannot be separated from ICT.	84%

As presented in Table 2 above, it can be seen that each statement has a high percentage (more than 70%). It indicates that the majority of the participants agree that ICT tools/media such as (1) social media (Whatsapp group), (2) web-based online resources (BBC Learning English, British Council, YouTube, manythings.org), (3) presentation tools (PPT, Glogster, Prezi, Powtoon), (4) E-learning (Edmodo, Google Classroom, Schoology), (5) apps/games ((Duolingo, FluentU, Busuu, Hello Talk, Bahaso) can help students to be more autonomous in learning.

Furthermore, most of the teachers that were interviewed agreed that ICT can help students to be more autonomous in learning. ICT allows the students to have wider access to the learning materials that they need. This makes the students more resourceful in doing their assignments. In connection to this statement, Çelik et. al (2012) found that ICT led the students for doing self-regulated learning and one of the activities was using ICT for searching online learning resources. This supports the idea that ICT provides wider access for students to enrich their learning resources.

> "ICT can help the learners to find the learner autonomy due to ICT is easy to use and to access, so that the students can easily find many material resources by using ICT and they can work the assignments individually"
> [Interviewee 1].

In today's language learning, teachers cannot separate their students with technology. The development of technology is deniable. Therefore, teachers must use technology wisely to help their students more independent in learning. This idea is supported by one of the interviewee's answers below.

> "It is essential to use technology as we are living with those kinds of things currently. Technology is walking on the same path as English I think so that technology will be helpful in making the students more autonomous. Technology, let's say internet (whether it's on websites or applications), provides a whole thing that is actually more than the teachers have in their brain, so when the students are aware of the use of technology and the importance of English, I think they'll autonomously learn more. It'll be more

interesting for the students as well, because we use something that we are living with, in the process of teaching and learning" [Interviewee 3].

Today's language learners who belong to Generation Z are familiar with the technology. Generation Z refers to the population segment born in 2001 or later in the digital era (Reeves & Oh as cited in Artemova, 2018). They are different from the past generation where technology is not as sophisticated as now. These learners are no longer comfortable with the old/classical teaching style. They need something new in their learning process as what has been said by one of the interviewees.

"Based on my experience, most of today's' students are Generation Z. They are no longer interested in the classical teaching method. It makes them bored. Usually, if the teaching does not involve the use of ICT, the students will be getting bored easily" [Interviewee 4].

Moreover, the teachers believed that some types of ICT tools such as web-based resources (e.g. YouTube & Google) and electronic-based media (e.g. videos & e-books) enhance the self-regulated learning situation. Wang & Chen (2019) revealed that YouTube could promote self-regulated learning for students and most of them used YouTube for searching for learning materials.

"I usually use ICT tools such as smartphone and ICT applications such as Google and Youtube" [Interviewee 1].
" It facilitates and provides the students with something that makes them learn autonomously, like videos, tasks, e-books, etc." [Interviewee 3].

Lastly, ICT can be beneficial to both teachers and students. For teachers, it helps them to be easier in motivating their students to learn, and for students, it assists them to find out any learning materials that they need. Therefore, ICT plays an important role in encouraging the students to be autonomous as what has been said by one of the interviewees below.

"I see it as a chance for the teachers to develop the teaching process as well, through the ICT both can adjust the needs based on the interest and perhaps the students are become more autonomous faster than the expectation" [Interviewee 5].

Teachers' action towards the utilization of ICT to promote learner autonomy

The last discussion caters to the teachers' actions towards the use of ICT to promote learner autonomy. Here is the table that presents the summary of the questionnaire results on teachers' actions towards the use of ICT to promote learner autonomy.

Table 3. Teachers' actions towards the use of ICT to promote learner autonomy.

No.	Statements	Percentage
21.	Teaching English using technology/ICT.	80%
22.	ICT for self-regulated learning.	78%
23.	Finding learning topics on the internet freely.	78%
24.	Submitting assignments by email/ e-learning apps.	79%

25.	Students have a presentation using an LCD projector.	77%
26.	ICT for more engaged & motivated students.	82%
27.	Involving students to choose games/apps for learning.	80%
28.	Video & audio for enhancing students' motivation & curiosity	83%
29.	Enhancing reading skills by searching for materials on the internet.	75%
30.	Do the best for promoting learning autonomy using ICT.	81%

From Table 3 above, it is described that all of the statements got a high percentage (75% above). It indicates that the majority of the participants had implemented technology or ICT to promote the autonomy to their students and wanted to apply other ICT tools to help the students more autonomous in learning such as encourage the students to use ICT to be self-regulated learner, involve the students to search any topics of texts based on their interest in the internet, ask students to submit assignments through email or Whatsapp, use video to enhance students' motivation & curiosity, involve the students to think about apps/games that are possible to be used in the classroom and use LCD projector to enhance students responsibility & creativity for presenting their tasks.

Moreover, based on the interview results, the majority of teachers used e-learning apps for their teaching and learning processes such as Kahoot. The utilization of the apps helps their students to be more flexible in submitting their assignments and to build collaborative learning through discussion on the apps. Besides, they also ask their students to find any other relevant learning materials from the internet

> *"I usually use the apps such as Kahoot to make them motivated and I suggest they download the apps which help them to study English such as dictionaries or ask them to surf in the website which has English learning content such as British council"* [Interviewee 2].

Even the teacher was not only using the application served by the commercial provider but also, she used e-learning made by her school. Her school is well-developed, so it can provide such an application.

> *"Now, my school is still developing e-learning, namely GeSchool. All of the teachers and students are already registered and they all already have accounts. Usually, this app is used to giving any tasks and exercises. This e-learning can be accessed by either smartphone or laptop"* [Interviewee 4].

To use ICT to help the students more autonomous, teachers have their strategies. Some of them let their students search some learning materials by using their smartphone and some others invite their students to do some quizzes through Kahoot apps.

> *"I usually instruct them to find some learning resources from a webpage, so they can find themselves sufficient and appropriate materials to work with the assignments"* [Interviewee 1].

> *"For teaching and learning activities in the classroom, I often use Kahoot (Quizzes based on the online game) for reviewing materials. I think the use of Kahoot is suitable for promoting autonomy. Almost all students like these apps. Based on my observation, students become more competitive and focus on each quiz session"* [Interviewee 4].

In relation to this idea, Yuruk (2019) justified that Kahoot referred to the gamified activities. Besides, her study revealed that teaching gamified activities using Kahoot helped the students to engage with lessons actively, helped them to master the target language effectively, and made them enjoying English learning using games. In this case, actively engage with lessons can lead the students' autonomy in learning.

Conclusion

Regarding the result of data analysis and discussion, this study confirms that English teachers have a positive understanding of the concept of promoting learner autonomy through the involvement of ICT. It derives from their perceptions which cover (1) understanding about learning autonomy, (2) views on the involvement of ICT to promote learner autonomy and (3) actions towards the utilization of ICT for promoting learner autonomy. The majority of the English teachers agreed that learner autonomy is crucial to be promoted for students since it could decrease the *spoon-fed* learning situation. Besides, learner autonomy also develops students' cognitive level, critical thinking skills, and decision making in which these skills are relevant to the demand of 21st-century skills. Likewise, the English teachers saw ICT as a good opportunity for helping them to promote learner autonomy. It is started by the fact that today's' students who belong to Generation Z are quite familiar with technology and cannot be separated from it. Besides, ICT could help the students to be more independent in enriching their learning resources and to be more motivated in engaging with the lessons. Lastly, in terms of teachers' actions, some of the English teachers had been implementing ICT for promoting learner autonomy to their students. In this case, they used smartphones, e-learning, and Kahoot application (for gamified activities). Those applications were useful for giving students' flexibility for submitting their tasks outside the classroom, building collaborative learning through discussion, find any other relevant learning resources independently, and increase students' engagement with the lessons. Furthermore, the researchers recommend that future studies explore students' perspectives of learner autonomy and their problems to be independent learners. There is still limited research which copes this issue since most of the research in learner autonomy tends to focus more on the teachers' perspectives.

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