

# Exploring Learners' Degree of Autonomy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century at Islamic Boarding School

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Covid-19 pandemic forces learners to study away from the teacher. Islamic Boarding school learners do not study and do other activities at the school since they are home. Consequently, they need to build autonomy in learning all subjects and English since they have a different kind of teacher guidance in this learning mode. This research aims at exploring learners' degree of autonomy at the Islamic Boarding School in Kuningan City. This study is a qualitative study that used an online questionnaire and interviews to collect the data. Eighty learners fulfilled the questionnaire, and six learners and two English teachers were involved in the interview. Findings show that (1) Islamic Boarding school learners' degree of autonomy is reactive autonomy. It is because of their need for teachers' guidance to learn English is high. They are good at setting goals for their learning, while their ability to monitor and evaluate the learning process is considered low since most of them are neutral to these activities. (2) Learners' autonomous activities are done both in the classroom and beyond the classroom during learning at home.

*Keywords:* Learner autonomy, Learners' degree of autonomy, Proactive and Reactive Autonomy

## INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 pandemic causes so many changes in this world. Face-to-face interaction among people is forbidden since it may result in the spread of Covid-19. School as the place where teaching and learning are held is also closed, and learners study at home, away from the teacher. This is a challenging and uncommon situation people face, which is also quite appalling as well. For the learners, especially Indonesian, learn away from the teachers at home forces them to be independent in learning. Consequently, they should have ownership of their learning process that they have autonomy over it.

Learner autonomy is first introduced by Henry Holec in 1981 that recently relates to the learning context and its most popular definition refers to the ability to take charge of one's learning (Benson, 2006, p. 22). This concept appears since the education has moved from teacher-centered to students-centered where it is influenced by the transformation of students' role in the classroom from highly dependent to interdependent and to be independent of the teacher (Elizondo and Garita, 2013, p. 326). Elizondo and Garita define the concept of autonomy as the situation in which teachers' domain in particular context is diminished. Therefore, autonomy in learning that supports students' centeredness and then learners' self-awareness of their own learning strategies and techniques, motivation, strengths and weaknesses come to appear (p. 327).

Many researches have been conducted in investigating learner autonomy. Begin with the explanation of autonomous learning theory to its practice (Kareva, 2015), ways to promote autonomy in material development and the use of technology (Sprivoska and Osmani 2015), teachers and learners' belief of autonomy (Xhaferri, et al, 2015), learner autonomy in Indonesian high school (Lengkanawati 2017, Khotimah et al 2019, & Cirocki et al 2019), and learners' level of autonomy (Karababa 2010 & Abdelrazaq 2018).

There are two research questions addressed in this research: (1) how is the learners' degree of autonomy in the Islamic Boarding School? and (2) what are autonomous activities do learners accomplish in and beyond the classroom? This research aims to explore learners' degree of autonomy from Islamic boarding school learners. Islamic boarding school is an institution where Islamic studies are taught (Yaqin, 2012, p. 18) and other subjects like other high school as well. It has some differences with general school. The learners are not allowed to use their self-phone at school. Besides, they have a longer learning time a day at the boarding school environment. They are also expected to master international language that can facilitate their act of *da'wah* in the broader context.

The boarding school accommodates to improve their Arabic and English skills through language program in several activities. In addition, English learners in this 21<sup>st</sup> century should have a number of skills that will be beneficial for them. Some 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills called 4Cs; communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creative skill in language learning should be trained (Halvorsen, 2018, p. 1). Autonomous learning can help them build these 4Cs.

In the classroom, the learners participate actively during the English class. However, when they are home, they are required to manage their own learning process themselves. They need to learn autonomously to accomplish the English tasks given as the representative of meeting in the

classroom. They need to maximize their autonomy to learn English at home and school when the classroom teaching process has been allowed. Moreover, when they are away from the teacher, they should find strategies as the alternative to understand the material and be able to do other activities they cannot do at the boarding school. From this phenomenon, learners' performances in this condition affect the level of their autonomy, either proactive or reactive autonomy.

There are several terms related to autonomy, and it is necessary to differentiate them; autonomy, learner autonomy, autonomous learning, and autonomous learner. Autonomous learning, according to Benson (2011) is a mode of learning in which learners demonstrate to control their learning. Meanwhile, the autonomous learner is a learner attribution for those who can control their learning. Kumaravadivelu (2003) defines it as the learner who has acquired the learning strategies, the knowledge about learning, and the attitudes that enable them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately, and independently of the teacher are the autonomous learner. Teng (2019) adds that autonomous learners are likely to seek knowledge beyond their curiosity and need. Thus, autonomous learner is the attribution for those who have learning strategies, knowledge about learning, and independent. These three characteristics can be broken down into several activities that indicate each aspects. This is based on the view of Kumaravadivelu (2003) as one of macro strategies to language learning that is promoting learner autonomy.

The first characteristic of autonomous learner is learning strategies. It begins with identifying learning strategies and styles, knowing strengths and weaknesses, and looking for teacher's intervention to get enough feedback on something difficult. The second is knowledge about learning where the main activities of autonomous learning exist. Knowledge about learning that autonomous learners do are setting goals (planning), monitoring, and evaluating the learning process. The third is that the learner can employ the learning strategies and knowledge about learning independently from the teacher.

The attributions of autonomous learner are those who have learning strategies, knowledge about learning, and the ability to be independent. The most assumption of autonomy is about being independent. However, it needs to understand the relation or dependence of teacher in this concept. Teng (2019) argues that learner autonomy requires collaboration between teacher and learner to be interdependent rather than totally independent and working in isolation. Therefore, as autonomous already have learning strategies and knowledge about learning, the action needed is to be interdependent of the teacher.

The contexts of autonomy are categorized under two headings. Benson (2007) on his critical review of literatures in the mid-1970s up to the end of the 20th century resulted to the division of contexts where autonomy can exist. The contexts are autonomy within the classroom and beyond the classroom. Kumaravadivelu (2003) has contributed to explain the practical advice for teachers specifically in promoting learners' autonomy through the paradigm of post-method assumption. He argues that the post-method condition signifies a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method and principled pragmatism. Meanwhile, Benson (2007) has discussed the implication of the use of classroom autonomy in more detail. It has led to

reconceptualization of autonomy as a usable construct for teachers who are willing to help their learners. Thus, classroom autonomy portrays learners develop autonomy without challenging constraints of classroom and curriculum organization to which they are subject. However, in the classroom that is kind of formal setting, there will be some constraints for learners. As the consequence, it is necessary to have the activity of negotiation to minimize constraints they have.

In this research, since there is a phenomenon of the implementation of distance learning, this mode of autonomy beyond the classroom learning also becomes a concern of this research. Distance learning requires learners to learn autonomously (Benson, 2011). It allows learner to learn more at home rather than at school or educational institution. It also involves learners' self-instruction and implies contact with their teacher. Although there will be some challenges learners face since it is something new form them, distance learning can stimulate learner autonomy (Benson, 2007). It is because of the need to learn autonomously. However, it should not be misinterpreted that distance learning can rise learner autonomy. Because there is finding that learners lack of distance learning even though it may require learner to be more autonomous (ibid, p.134). From this finding, it implies that the development of learner autonomy is dependent on the learners themselves.

Distance learning is not merely about providing course or material to be understood by the teacher. It is more complex and, however, should involve interaction, guidance, feedback, support, the collaboration between teacher and learners (ibid, p.135). They are necessary to be taken into account and teacher needs to struggle to provide all of them when teaching in this mode. In addition, based on the work of Vanijdee in 2003 (as cited in Benson, 2017) proves that distance learning has resulted to the two types of distance learners. The first type is the majority of self-sufficient learners who show a limited degree of autonomy but are able to follow the course. The second is the smaller number of substantial learners who are more proactive to make choices and decisions of their own learning. Therefore, learners' degree of autonomy can also be seen in this mode of teaching and learning process even though they are learning at home.

In the formal setting, teacher can adjust learner autonomy that would be suitable for their specific learning and teaching activity. This condition is in line with Teng (2019) who argues that degrees of autonomy exist and Kumaravadivelu (2003) who states that teacher can negotiate a comfortable degree of autonomy. However, it might be a mistake to try to relate the degree of autonomy with the level of English proficiency. According to his view, degrees of autonomy are initial stage that only emphasize on raising learners' awareness of the reason behind teachers' choice of goals, tasks, and materials; the intermediate stage that emphasize the learner to choose from a range of choices given by the teacher; and the advanced stage that emphasize learners' decision of their own goals, tasks, and materials (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 144).

Littlewood, (as cited in Hsieh, 2019) proposes two category of learner autonomy. The distinction between them is described by Knowles (as cited in Teng, 2019) in which proactive learners refer to learners who are likely to take charge of learning process while reactive learners refer to learners who relatively wait for the external stimuli and help (p.9). In line with Littlewoods's, the concepts of proactive and reactive autonomy are as below:

1. Proactive Autonomy: Learners control the direction of autonomy as well as the activity themselves. They take charge over their own learning by setting goals, selecting methods and technique, and evaluating knowledge and skills.
2. Reactive Autonomy: It is the initial stage of proactive autonomy. Learners control the learning activities when its direction has been set by the teacher. They have not created their own direction yet, when a direction has been instructed, it allows them to systematize their resources autonomously in order to achieve their goal.

The experts' views mentioned above are linked each other. It can be concluded proactive autonomy by Littlewood is the advanced stage autonomy by Kumaravadivelu. Reactive autonomy is the beginning to intermediate stage of autonomy where learners raise their awareness about their learning and start to choose what the teacher give as their choices in the language learning.

Autonomous learners are those who have learning strategies. The most comprehensive learning strategies are suggested by Rebecca Oxford (as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2003) that consist of direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are those that immediately include the target language while indirect strategies are those that reinforce and manage language learning without directly involving the target language (p.135).

1. Direct Strategies: Memory, Cognitive, and Compensation Strategy
  - a. Memory: Remembering and retrieving information through creating mental connection, applying images and sources, reviewing, and employing action.
  - b. Cognitive: Understanding and producing language as the process of transformation the learning material including practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, creating structure for input and output.
  - c. Compensation: Improvisation with the limitation but still improving the proficiency. It can be through guessing smartly and other overcoming constraints strategies.
2. Indirect Strategies: Metacognitive, Affective, and Social Strategy
  - a. Metacognitive: Coordinating the learning process (a high-order strategies) through analyzing, monitoring, evaluating, planning, and organizing.
  - b. Affective: Controlling attitudes and emotions through lowering anxiety, encouraging own self, taking emotional temperature.
  - c. Social: Learning and working together with others as interpersonal behavior to increase English communication skill through cooperation and empathizing with others.

Learners employ their own strategies to set goals, monitor, and evaluate the learning process as the main activity of autonomous learning. Therefore, the taxonomy of learning strategies mentioned above is a guide to know which category of strategy most learner employ. In

fact, autonomous learner will employ more metacognitive strategy as it related to coordinating the learning process.

One of strategies to promote learner autonomy which is very essential is teacher's role. It is in line with Benson's (2011) view about some approaches to promote learner autonomy which one of them is teacher-based approach. As this approach emphasizes teachers' role, the aspects of teacher-based approach were taken from (Kumaravadivelu, 2003 & Teng, 2019). Based on two experts, teachers role to promote learner autonomy are: negotiating with learners, giving guidance and counselling, raising learners' awareness about their learning, creating an environment to make learner encouraged to learn language, giving support and motivation, facilitation, and scaffolding.

**METHOD(S)**

The method of this research is qualitative. Online questionnaire and interview were used to collect the data. The researcher used questionnaire which includes 5 items of open-ended questions and 30 items of close-ended questions. According to Brown (2001) questionnaires are any written instrument that present respondents with a series of questions to which they are to react either by writing out their answer or selecting from among existing answers (as cited in Dornyei, 2002, p.6). Besides, the researcher also used interview to get deeper information. Interview is an important way or data collection technique for the researcher to check, clarify, or verify the impressions h/she has obtained the observation (Fraenkel et al, 2012, p.481). In this research, since the researcher could not conduct an observation, the interview was used as checking and clarifying tool for the questionnaire data.

The data was obtained at the Islamic boarding school located in Kuningan city. There were 80 learners who fulfilled the online questionnaire. Purposeful sampling was used to choose six learner as the interviewee based on their response on the questionnaire. There were also two English teachers as the interviewee to explore about teachers' role in promoting learner autonomy.

*Table 1: Interview Participants*

Learners				
<i>No</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Category</i>
1.	LA	XI	Social 2	Pro
2.	LB	XI	Social 2	Pro
3.	LC	XI	Science 4	Pro
4.	LD	XI	Science 3	Re
5.	LE	XI	Science 5	Re
6.	LF	XI	Social 2	Re
Teachers				
<i>No</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Code</i>
7.	Teacher A	XI	Social 1-2, Science 1-2	TA
8.	Teacher B	XI	Science 3-5	TB

Collecting data process was done via online. The questionnaire was developed using Google form and distributed to all learners of Grade XI. There were 80 learners who fulfilled the online questionnaire. The interview was conducted after the questionnaire result has been analyzed. It was conducted via online using WhatsApp Voice Call and recorded using audio recorder on the mobile phone.

Close-ended questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive analysis to see the frequency and percentage of each items. Meanwhile, open-ended questionnaire was analyzed in a similar way as the interview data. After working on the transcription, the researcher create some codes and put the same information into categories.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

There are two findings of this research based on the research questions proposed. The first finding is about learners' degree of autonomy which the data was taken from the online questionnaire. The second finding is about learners' activities in the classroom when the teaching and learning process is still conducted at the boarding school and beyond the classroom when learning at home.

The profile of the learners involved in this research is presented below:

*Table 2: Participants' Profile*

Participants		Motivation to Learn English		Preferred Skill	
Male	16	Communicate with native speakers	82,5%	Speaking	70%
				Listening	6,3%
Female	64	Get a good mark	8,8%	Reading	13,7%
		Get a good job	8,7%	Writing	10%
Total	80		100%		100%

Table 2.1 presents the information about participants' profile that consists about learners' motivation to learn English and their preferred skill in English. Most of them (82,5%) are motivated to communicate with native speaker. The majority of them (70%) also prefer speaking skill of the four skills in English.

### Learner's Degree Autonomy

The finding of learner autonomy was obtain from several items of the close-ended questionnaire. The items are setting goals, monitoring, evaluating the learning process which then categorized as the main activities of autonomous learning in term of the knowledge of learning. It is also about how learner control or regulate their learning process. The result is presented in figure 1.

Figure 1: Learners' Degree Autonomy

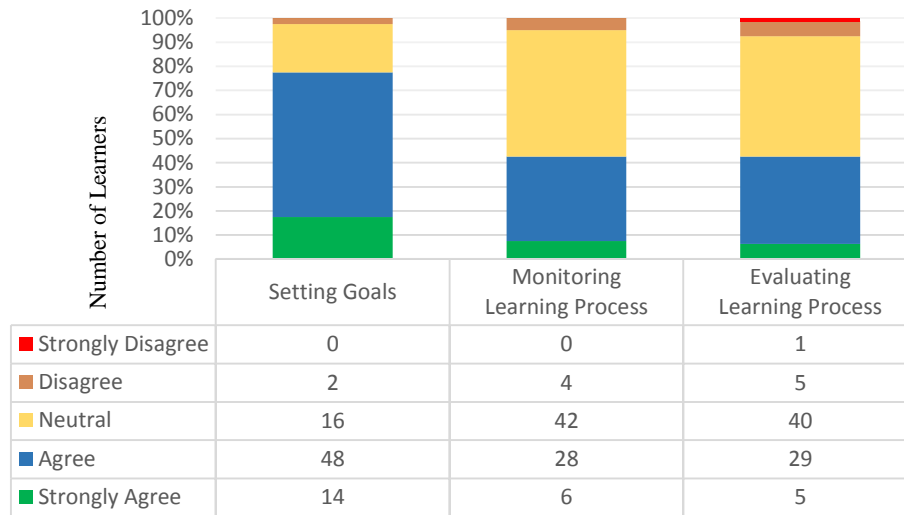


Figure 1 is about learners' degree of autonomy that seen from three main learner autonomy activities; setting goals, monitoring, and evaluating learning process. Setting goals and planning activities have high percentages that 60% agree and 17,5% strongly agree. However, there are only 35% of them who agree and 7,5% who strongly agree to monitoring learning process. It is similar to evaluating learning process that there are only 36,3% learners who agree and 6,3% who strongly agree. Most of them are neutral for monitoring and evaluating learning process.

Table 3: Proactive and Reactive Learner Autonomy

LA Main Activities	Pro	Re
<b>SG</b>	LA: Note the targets on the agenda LB: Have a desire to acquire three languages and English for going abroad, LC: Learn English only to accomplish the mark needed.	LD: Have a desire to share the knowledge to others and for having a good job LE: Learn English every day in order to be able to speak well and politely LF: English for going abroad
<b>MO</b>	LA: Use "Duolingo" to remind the schedule of learning English. LB: Practice speaking with family member LC: Set goals for certain material and plan activity to achieve it.	LD: Design time and material management that have understood or have not. LE: Join online class and ask more knowledgeable ones LF: Look at the number of vocabulary mastery progress.
<b>EV</b>	LA: Rarely evaluate. Communicate with native speaker and intensively learn through "Duolingo" LB: Try to answer TOEFL questions, practice speaking English, memorize vocabulary. LC: Looking at the result of report book by the end of semester to evaluate.	LD: Compare the marks of each materials and to other learners LE: Ask teacher to get feedback LF: Compare the marks with the minimum achievement criteria or KKM



Table 3 shows the data taken from interview with six learners who categorized into proactive and reactive learner. From the table 3 about the information of learning strategies that proactive and reactive learners do as the main activities of learner autonomy, it can be seen that some activities are corresponding to the Oxford's Learning Strategies (cited in Kumaravadivelu 2003). Although those three aspects are including in the metacognitive strategies; setting goal, monitoring, and evaluating, the activities can be broken down into several strategies. It can be seen from the table 4 below to make easier understanding kinds of strategies existed in their main activities of learner autonomy.

*Table 4: Learning Strategies in LA Main Activities*

Learners' Strategies	Oxford's LS	Codes	F	%
1. Creating personal targets 2. Memorizing vocabulary	<i>Memory Strategies</i>	MS	2	12,5
1. Practicing speaking English 2. Asking people to get information 3. Asking teacher to get feedback 4. Answering TOEFL questions	<i>Cognitive Strategies</i>	CS	4	25
1. Utilizing internet to learn english 2. Using an application to communicate with native speaker	<i>Compensation Strategies</i>	COM	2	12,5
1. Setting goals and planning activities 2. Making time and material management 3. Controlling vocabulary mastery 4. Evaluating English progress through the report book 5. Comparing mark with other learners 6. Comparing mark with KKM	<i>Metacognitive Strategies</i>	MCS	6	37,5
-	<i>Affective Strategies</i>	AS	0	0
1. Speaking English with family member 2. Speaking with native speakers	<i>Social Strategies</i>	SS	2	12,5
<b>Total</b>			<b>15</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above shows that the most frequent strategy is metacognitive strategy with 37,5% found in three kind of activities; setting learning goal, making learning and time management, and evaluating process. Cognitive strategy with 25% found in three kind activities; asking other people to get information, answering TOEFL test, and practicing speaking English. Social strategy with 12,5% found in the activity of speaking English with other people, family member and native speaker. Compensation strategy can be seen from the activity of utilizing internet to learn English when learners get insufficient information at home with 12,5%. Memory strategy with 20% found in two kind of activities; making notes of target and memorizing vocabulary. However, there is no activity with affective strategy in learner autonomy main activities.

Therefore, it can be concluded from the explanation above that Islamic Boarding School learners' degree of autonomy is reactive autonomy. It is because their need of teacher guidance is high. They are good at setting goals for own learning but lack of ability in monitoring and evaluating activities. However, their effort to carry out the main activity of autonomy corresponds to the learning strategies both direct and indirect strategies.

### Autonomous Activities in the Classroom

Learners' activities in the classroom cannot be separated with the teacher. In the concept of learner autonomy, the presence of the teacher is vital and it employs learner-teacher interaction related to learner autonomy as below:

*Figure 2: Learner-Teacher Interaction*

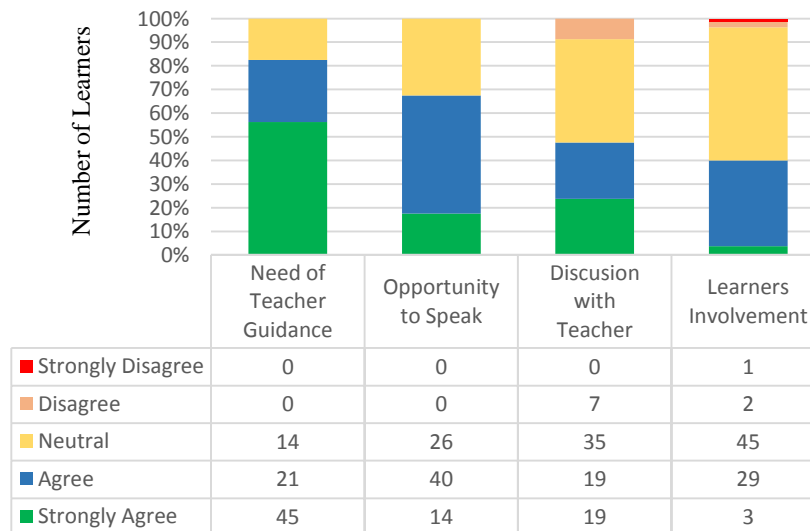


Figure 2 shows the information about learner-teacher interaction in the classroom that consists of teacher guidance, opportunity to speak English at the class, discussion or consultation with the teacher, and learners' involvement in the teaching process (planning, monitoring, and evaluating which are autonomous learning main activities). 57,5% learners strongly agree and 25% agree to the need of teacher guidance. There are 17,5% of them who strongly agree and 50% who agree that teacher always gives them opportunity to speak English. For the discussion with the teacher, each 23,8% of them strongly agree and also agree to this. And the last, most of them are neutral whether the teacher involves them in planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning process with the percentage 56,3%.

Table 5: Learners' Activities in the Classroom

Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Pay attention to the teacher explanation and taking notes	70	87,5%
Participating actively in a discussion	18	22,5%
Having conversation with teacher to get feedback	15	18,8%
Sharing ideas about tasks and activities	10	12,5%

Table 5 shows learners' activity in the classroom during the learning process. The highest score is in the first activity that is 87,5% of learners are paying attention on teacher's explanation and taking notes during the learning process. There are 22,5% of learners who actively participate in classroom discussion and 18,8% of them who have a conversation with the teacher to consult and get the feedback form him/her. However, there are only 12,5% of learners who share their ideas about tasks and activities to make the learning process more enjoyable.

Furthermore, learners activities in the classroom are categorized into five activities based on the information obtained from the open-ended questionnaire and interview. Islamic boarding school learners' autonomous activities in the classroom or school context are:

*i. Consulting to the teacher*

Learners consult to the teacher when they want to know new information or English material that they have not understood. Commonly, the consultation is during the learning process. Most of the interviewee claims that they always ask to the teacher to learn something new. Interestingly, they are from proactive learner. Meanwhile, the rest of them are seldom to directly ask the teacher.

Not only consult the teachers, the learners also get motivation and other kinds of guidance at school. The teacher always motivates them to learn English by giving the real example of the alumni who succeed studying abroad. Another guidance given is additional language class such TOEFL preparation.

*ii. Asking to peers*

This point has the relation with the previous one. In contrast, learners who prefer more to ask to the teacher seldom ask to friends. Learners who prefer to ask something about English material to their friend feel more comfortable to do it. It is definitely someone they ask is considered more knowledgeable and understand about the material than the average learners.

*iii. Going to the library*

For additional learning sources, the majority of learners always go to the library. The activity they do is commonly reading books or novel which sometimes in English language. It is interesting that some learners put a dictionary beside the book when they are reading it to find out particular unfamiliar words. The learners are often going to the library in the break time to read some books or find something on the internet. This condition is also known by the second teacher of this research, TB. The teacher knows it form the list of library visitors.

*iv. Utilizing internet access*

Even though they are at school and not permitted to use self-phone, they can still access the internet in the library. It means that when they go to the library besides they can read some books, they can also use the personal computer provided to access something they want to discover.

*v. Participating at Language Programs*

Due to one of the visions of the boarding school is to be language skillful, the institution provides Language Department that has beneficial language program for English and Arabic. According to the information from the learners in the interview, there are three main activities of language program. They are mufordat, muhadasah, and muhadhoroh.

- a. Mufradat: Mufradat is an Arabic word which means vocabulary. This activity is done in the morning after shubuh. The learners get a book of vocabulary in three languages; Arabic, English and Indonesian to memorize. There is one mentor each class to give the example of pronunciation and receive learners' vocabulary oral test. Vocabulary mastery test will be conducted at mid and end of the semester.
- b. Muhadasah: This activity is conducted on Sunday morning. Learners are in pair to memorize and practice the conversation from a book of conversation given by the language team. There will be also a mentor that monitor the process.
- c. Muhadoroh: This activity is done every Saturday evening. It gives the opportunity to practice speaking in three languages. It is kind of speeches activity conducted at the classroom in which learners have made a decoration of the classroom for this agenda. The activity is opened by tilawah Quran in three languages, speeches, sholawat, and closed by doa. After the main agenda finished, learners are free to make an entertainment.

The teacher (TA) who participated in this research is also the head of language department of the boarding school. Therefore, besides guiding learners to learn English in the classroom, the teacher is also controlling and improving their skills through the language program.

**Autonomous Activities beyond the Classroom**

Islamic boarding school learners have been learning at home for months. The school implements distance learning for all subjects including English. Almost all the respondents of the questionnaire share their activity during learning English from home. Interestingly, most of them do some activities that useful to the improvement of their English skill. The researcher categorized those activity into several kinds as presented below:

*i. Distance Learning*

Recently, distance learning becomes very popular in this condition where the learning process is not permitted to be implemented at school. This is one of government policy to avoid the Corona virus spread over among learners at school. This mode of learning is included in Benson's theory of autonomy beyond the classroom. In this case, based on the teachers and learners answer, the

distance learning implemented is through Zoom Meeting and Google Classroom to submit learners' assignment. However, learners say that the teacher sometimes only give the assignment to submit and give insufficient explanation. Therefore, to get more understanding about the material and assignment, the learners independently find the additional material on the internet.

TA and TB implement the online or distance learning using different kinds of media. Those are used in different functions. The teacher makes a video conference via Zoom when there is material need to be explained first. Then, when the learners have some questions, they can ask to the teacher via WhatsApp or Telegram. Meanwhile, learners submit quiz, duty, or assignment to the Google Classroom that has been made by the teacher.

#### *ii. Learning English Independently from Various Sources*

Learners get the ease to internet access to learn English. Almost all learners do access the reference for English learning on the internet. Based on the response, they find out additional learning material on the internet.

*"...finding additional reference needed on the internet, trying to understand material as I can as possible."*

They access the material on the internet to make them more understand the material being discussed with the teacher. Besides, they also independently learn English by watching learning video on YouTube or particular online learning platform. Some of them even joined the online class. There are also learners who learn English grammar and phrase on the internet.

Other media that learners use as sources of learning are English songs, movies, and books. Most of the learners do the same things. They enjoy listening to English song while translating the meaning on their mind. Through the lyrics, they can learn new vocabularies. The learners also enjoy watching English movie and they even try to watch without Indonesian subtitle. Some of them like to watch Korean video and they understand the content through translating the English subtitle. They feel more encouraged to watch everything in English.

#### *iii. Learning New Vocabularies*

Another activity learners do at home is learn new vocabularies. As mentioned before that they enjoy listening to English songs, watching English movies, and reading English books, those activities can also help them to learn new vocabularies. They can increase the new ones which they have not been familiar with before.

#### *iv. Practicing to Speak English*

Even they are at home, they still can practice speaking English. Although only a little number of learners who do this, the interesting one is that they invite their family member to speak English. In addition, there is learner who has been communicating with other people over the world because of a community of certain musician. Therefore, her English skill can be applied through communicating with them.

*v. Learning Other Languages*

Boarding school learners who participate in this research are required to master English and Arabic. Besides mastering English, several learners are also learning other languages such as Korean and Turkish. They learn new languages as well as English since the subtitle is commonly in English. So that they can learn two languages at the same time.

**Discussion**

Based on the research background, this research is aimed at exploring learners' degree of autonomy. The degree investigated are proactive and reactive autonomy by Littlewood (1999). The data were collected through online questionnaire and interview and analyzed with descriptive analysis, coding, and categorization.

The first finding is the majority of learners are still in reactive autonomy degree. They have a highly need of teacher guidance (57,5% strongly agree and 25% agree) especially in this distance learning. According to some learners' responses, the teacher sometimes only give the assignment and they argue that they cannot understand the material because the teacher give less explanation. Meanwhile, other learners responded that they can independently find out additional information from the Internet. This is in line with Benson (2011) that distance learning requires learners to learn autonomously. However, when the learners cannot follow the learning process, they may encounter some challenges.

It is interesting to discuss about distance learning in this pandemic time since this mode of learning become well-known quickly for the teaching and learning process is implemented out of school. Distance learning is one of autonomous beyond the classroom proposed by Benson (2011) which is resource-based approaches as the implementation of autonomous learning. He suggest teacher to blend or combined more than one learning mode as well as the use of technology. The findings form the researcher conducted by Osmani (2015) show that the use of technology can empower and encourage learners to be autonomous and actively participate in learning process. It also needs the right selection of materials, activities, and tasks. In this research, based on the interview, the teachers' conduct the distance learning using three kinds of application; Zoom for video conference, Google Classroom and Form for assignments, and WhatsApp for discussion or question. The teachers have been using the technology to support the implementation of distance learning.

For the three main activities of autonomous learning; setting goal (planning), monitoring, and evaluating, they have different intensity to these. Most of them have planned their learning by setting their own goals in learning English. It is proven by 65% of them who agree and 17,5% strongly agree to this. When compared to the interview result, all the interviewee give more information about how they set their goal by making some notes and targets. However, monitoring and evaluating process are considered low since most of them give neutral answer.

It is the finding of the research conducted by Lengkanawati (2017) and Khotimah et al (2019) that shows the concept of autonomy is from western context and thus it does not entirely fit to Indonesian's and teacher as well as learner's understanding are shaped by Indonesian context.

Similarly, when the researcher asked to the teacher, although they have understood about the concept, they argue that implementing autonomous learning is quite difficult since the students get used to be spoon-fed method in learning. In addition, planning and choosing learning objective are teacher's responsibility written in the lesson plan which learners have no charge in doing that. However, the Islamic Boarding School teachers are open to have learners' request and communicate their goal, and allow learners to self-value to check their answer on the test. It means that the negotiation of learning objective is done among teacher and learners.

The presence of Taxonomy of Learning Strategies by Oxford is the guideline for learners in controlling their own learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). The Islamic Boarding school learners have been using their own strategies to learn English. From the main autonomous activities, it is found that the most frequent strategy used is metacognitive strategies (37,5%) since in directly relate to the act of planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning process. Metacognitive strategy is a high-order strategies that play important role in managing learning process although it does not directly involved the target language. Another strategy that learners employ is cognitive strategy (25%) that directly relates to how learner learn and practice the target language.

The second findings of this research show the activities that learners do both in the classroom and beyond the classroom. Islamic Boarding School is such a community for the learners to learn and practice English among others. So here, their activities are not only done in the classroom. Besides consulting and discussing with the teacher and learners, the learners also participate actively in the language program. One of learners stated that they are shaped to be a good English learner in this boarding school. The teacher (TA) also added that the guidance for them is also given in this program.

In contrast, the activities done beyond the classroom are quite different. The learner get different modes of teacher guidance but they have more access to use their mobile phone. Most of them use their mobile phone to access the internet to find out additional material. They learn through watching videos, listening English song, reading books, and English application (Duolingo). It is clear that the learners have various learning strategies to learn. And thus only successful learners who can do this. They find out strategies that fit them and the tasks as well. As Kumaravadivelu (2003) argues that when learners only have few strategies and cannot find appropriate strategies for their tasks, they cannot become successful learner as autonomous learner. Thus, the Islamic Boarding School learners categorized as the successful learners in term of various learning strategies they have. However, for the overall requirements of autonomous learner they are in the reactive degree since they still need teacher guidance, training, and awareness to monitor and evaluate their learning process.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results, it can be concluded that (1) Islamic Boarding school learners' degree of autonomy is reactive autonomy. It is because their need of teacher guidance to learn English is high (57,5% strongly agree and 25% agree). They are good at setting goals for own learning with

60% who agree and 17,5% who strongly agree while their ability to monitor and evaluate are considered low since the most of them are neutral to these activities. (2) Learners autonomous activities in the classroom are: consulting to the teacher, asking to peers, going to the library, utilizing internet access, and participating at the language program. While for activities beyond the classroom are: distance learning, learning English independently, learning new vocabularies, practicing to speak English, and learning other languages.

The learners are expected to be proactive autonomous learner since they already have the potential and the teachers' who promote their autonomy. Through developing learner autonomy, they will be able to develop their critical thinking and other skills from 4Cs as well. Since no one knows when the pandemic will end, the researcher hope that the learner autonomy will remain and be raised when the teaching and learning can be implemented in a normal situation.

Autonomy is a complex concept. Future researchers are expected to be able to explore deeply and focus on more specific aspects of learner autonomy. The findings of this research consists of many aspects and it actually can be focused only on particular aspect. In term of reference, the researcher hopes that the future researcher can use the newest theory of learner autonomy that considers about 21<sup>st</sup> century English learning.

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