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## Project Work as an Approach to Develop Aspects of Learner Autonomy for Language Learners

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### **Abstract:**

*Learner autonomy is widely believed to be beneficial for students in language learning. And promoting learner autonomy is considered to be necessary. In the literature, it is found that there are various approaches can be applied to enhance learner autonomy. Project work is identified to be a potential approach to stimulate perspectives of autonomous learning. This paper aims to illuminate the aspects of learner autonomy, project work and its characteristics, and the rationale for choosing project work to develop learner autonomy.*

**Keywords:** *Learner autonomy, project work, developing learner autonomy*

### **1. Introduction**

Over the last twenty years, learner autonomy in language education has become influential as a goal in many parts of the world for it brings great benefits for language learners (Benson, 2001; Cotterall and Crabbe, 1999; and Sinclair, 2000).

The benefits autonomy brings in learning can be seen in three major areas (Little, 1991). First, when students get involved in the process of making decisions, 'learning should be more focused and purposeful, and thus more effective both immediately and in the long term' (Little, 1991, p. 8). Second, as the learners take their responsibility for their learning, the constraints between learning and living that are generally found in the traditional teacher-centred training modes, should be minimized. Lastly, it is accepted that when a student is autonomous for her/his own learning, it is more likely that (s)he will be responsible in other area of her/his life, and, as a result, (s)he will be a useful and more effective member of the society (Little, 1991).

Meanwhile, learner autonomy is said to promote life-long learning and fosters the continuing growth of students' capacities (Egel, 2009). This argument is shared by Cotterall (1995) and Nguyen (2009). Cotterall (1995) states that autonomous learning stimulates the abilities to produce new knowledge based on their own experiences, interests, and needs, and that autonomy makes full of the resources of the school and the community. Similarly, Hadi (2011) and Nguyen (2009) agree that being autonomous and attaining independent learning skills such as problem-solving, decision-making and organization will assist learners at every level to be successful and competent before integrating into and facing real life and society.

Acknowledging the mentioned above benefits of learner autonomy in language learning, many scholars raise voices in favor of developing autonomy for language learners. And various attempts have been made to establish theoretical frameworks of perspective of learner autonomy and suggest approaches to enhance the aspects of autonomous learning. Among the approaches identified in the literature, project work is considered to be a potential approach to develop autonomy for learners in the learning process. Project work is widely defined by Beckett (2002) as long-term learning activity which engages students in doing both individual and cooperative tasks. Benson (2001) states that project work can be integrated into the existing syllabus to stimulate autonomy for learners.

This paper discusses the aspects of learning autonomy commonly identified in the literatures, and the rationale for choosing project work in promoting learner autonomy.

### **2. Learner Autonomy**

#### *2.1. Aspects of Learner Autonomy*

Learner autonomy is recognized as a multi-dimensional construct. And therefore, scholar also approach the concept differently. However, it is found that there are the four aspects of learner autonomy which are the technical aspect, the psychological aspect, the political-critical aspect, and the socio-cultural aspect.

The technical aspect is the most often recognized aspect in the configuration of learner autonomy. In the literature, access to learning recourses and use of learning skills are believed to be directly connected to technical aspect of learner autonomy and promotion of learner autonomy (Agustina, 2017; Benson, 2001; Benson, 2013; Benson and Voller, 1997; Murase, 2011; Oxford, 2008; Wang, 2015; and White, 2008). Benson (1997) refers the technical autonomy to 'the act of learning a language without the intervention of a teacher' and as 'situations' within which 'learners are obliged

to take charge of their own learning' (Benson, 1997, p.19). According to Murase (2011), in the technical version of autonomy there are two elements: situational and behavioral. The former refers to the situational conditions, learning settings or environments such as self-access centers, or the learning resources in which learners have to manage the learning process independently of the teacher, thus stressing the skills they require to this purpose (Benson, 1997; Oxford, 2003). And the latter is related to the use or development of learning strategies or skills (Littlewood, 1996).

The psychological aspect of learner autonomy is often discussed and related to various terms such as attitudes, motivation, willingness, readiness, responsibility, self-confidence (Trinh, 2005). And attitudes and motivation attract most discussions which could be found in a wide range of works of Benson (1997), Dam (1995), Dickinson (1995), Little (1996), Little (2007), Murase (2011), Oroujlou&Vahedi (2011), Oxford (2003), and Ushioda (1996). Little (2007) elaborates that (1) learners who are volitional in their learning will be fulfilled and motivated learners; and (2) if they do not feel that learning effort is paying off their autonomy will be undermined. Oxford (2003) states that in psychological perspective of learner autonomy, mental and emotional characteristics of learners are examined. Autonomous learners have qualities such as these: high motivation; self-efficiency; and beliefs in one's capabilities. In a similar vein, Murase (2011, p.44) argues that the psychological type of autonomy consists of 'metacognitive, motivational and affective sub-dimension'. In terms of attitudes and autonomy, Benson (1997) defines the autonomy as a capacity, 'a construct of attitudes and abilities which allows learners to take more responsibility for their own learning' (Benson, 1997, p.19). Learner autonomy also tends to be influenced by the kind of attitudes learners hold. Dickinson (1995) describes autonomy as an 'attitude toward the learning' (p.166). Attitudes, according Knapper and Cropley (1991), can affect not only the degree and nature of autonomy, but also learning styles, strategies, contents, and personalities of learners. Therefore, when learners stand out as autonomous, they become so not just because they have attained the knowledge and strategies required, but also because they have developed certain positive attitudes which allow them to use these resources effectively and autonomously (Wenden, 1991).

Among the four aspects of identified to be present in the configurations of learner autonomy, the political-critical perspective also attracts lots of discussions. This aspect is believed to take into account the concepts of freedom, rights or choice of learners of their contents and methods in their own learning (Holec, 1981; Littlejohn, 1985, Dickinson, 1987; Crabbe, 1993; Cotterall, 1995; Deci, 1996; Littlewood, 1996; Benson, 1997; Oxford, 2003, Huang and Benson, 2013, and Parker et al., 2017). Making choices and making decisions are obviously considered to be the core elements in the political-critical autonomy. Holec (1981) comments the range of autonomous learner's control in terms of making the following decisions: determining objectives, defining the contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring procedures of acquisition and evaluating of what has been acquired. In the similar streamline thought, Dickinson (1987, p.11) defines autonomy as 'the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions'. Oxford (2008) extends the list of possible decisions related to: (1) the language to be learned, (2) the purpose, general content, topics, and specific tasks of the foreign language learning; (3) the amount and the type of directions the learner needs; (4) the kinds of learning strategies to be used; (5) the nature, frequency, and reporting format of assessment; (6) formality and informality of the learning; (7) timing, and (8) location (e.g.: at a self-assess center, on the phone or computer at home, or elsewhere).

The socio-cultural dimension of learner autonomy frequently stresses two components: interaction and collaboration. Many authors accentuate the role of interaction in the socio-cultural aspect by stressing interdependence in learning (Boud, 1988; Dam, 1995; and Little, 1991). Boud (1988) states 'autonomous learning does not occur in a vacuum' (p.29). And Little (1991) stresses that autonomy is not synonym for learning in isolation. Interaction is also said to be an indispensable element. Benson (2001) argues that without the interaction with other students and teachers, the capacity for learner autonomy may not even develop. Collaboration has been widely recognized to be beneficial in terms of cognitive, social, and affective aspects of learning (Donato, 2004). And as mentioned above, Little (1996) indicates that autonomous learning is a product of interdependence rather than entire independence. Scholars also shares that autonomous learning does not mean that students work in isolation or separately from teachers (Boud, 1988; Marshall & Rowland, 2006; Thornbury, 2000; and Song et al., 2011). Nguyen (2012) stresses the role of collaboration in autonomous learning by giving two important arguments: (1) the collaboration between teachers and students and between students appears to be one of the key factors forming the process of autonomous learner; and (2) students can only work independently and effectively when they receive proper instruction from teachers.

## 2.2. Approaches to Enhance Learner Autonomy

There are different ways to foster autonomy found among scholars in the literature. Dam (1995) believes that the use of self-reports; diaries and evaluation sheets; and learner's belief and attitude can help learners exercise their autonomy. As for self-report, it is used to collect information regarding how students go through learning task and this method assist them to become more aware of their own strategies, teachers assign some tasks to students and encourage them to report what they are thinking during conducting the tasks. Regarding diaries and evaluation sheets, when students write diaries and evaluation sheets, they will become competent to identify their problems and suggest solutions and they are capable to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning. With learner's belief and attitudes, the essential factors such as learner's motivation, their attitude toward learning a language, and their perception about themselves as learners and learning per se determine the success of learning and assist learners to achieve potential resources in order to overcome difficulties and achieve autonomy. In addition, it is obvious that if learners can change some negative beliefs and attitudes the learning process will be facilitated.

Based on the viewpoint that learner autonomy in formal educational contexts leads to involvement of learners so as to plan, implement, to monitor and to evaluate learning process, Little (2004) assumes three essential pedagogical principles govern over the development of autonomy in language learning: (1) *Learner involvement*: learners are engaged and involved in learning process to share responsibility; (2) *Learner reflection*: when learners intent to plan, monitor, to evaluate their learning they are encouraged to think critically. (3) *Appropriate target language use*: target language is used by students as the principal medium of language learning.

In search for a culturally 'appropriate pedagogy' for autonomy, Smith (2003) suggests that there are 'weak' and 'strong' versions of pedagogy. In his view, 'technological (i.e., focusing on self-access center) and strategy training-based suggestions may constitute a mainstream, or a 'weak' version of developing learner autonomy' (Smith, 2003, p.22). He stresses that these weak approaches should be avoided and goes on to advocate a 'strong version' of pedagogy, in which it focuses on 'a conscious attempt on the part of the teacher to shift the initiative in decision-making to classroom learners' (Smith, 2003, p.18).

It is also identified that Benson' (2001) six approaches to foster learner autonomy are the most frequently discussed ones. These approaches are resource-based, technology-based, learner-based, classroom-based, teacher-based, and curriculum-based. Elaborating on curriculum-based approach, Benson (2001) states that it takes two forms: the weak form and the strong form of the process syllabus. The weak version involves learners' project work in which learners determine the content, methods of inquiry, and outcomes of the real-world research in collaboration with their teachers.

### 3. Project Work

#### 3.1. Defining Project Work

It is found that various terms are used interchangeably with project work such as project method, project approach, project-oriented approach, and project-based learning. These terms are commonly used in general education and language education literature. The term 'project' used in EFL context was first proposed by Fried-Booth (1986, p.8). He points out that language tasks arise naturally from the project itself, developing cumulatively in response to a basic objective, namely, the project.

There are many other definitions of project work proposed by various authors. Beckett (2002) defines project work as a long-term (several weeks) activity that involves a variety of individual or cooperative tasks such as developing a research plan and questions and implementing the plan through empirical or document research that includes collecting, analyzing, and reporting data orally and/or in writing. Emphasizing the importance of project work in language learning, Stoller (2002, p.109) discusses that 'project-based learning should be viewed as a versatile vehicle for fully integrated language and content learning, making it a viable option for language educators working in a variety of instructional settings including general English, English for academic purposes (EAP), English for specific purposes (ESP), and English for occupational/vocational/professional purposes, in addition to pre-service and in-service teacher training.' Haines (1989) argues that in the context of language learning, projects are multi-skill activities focusing on topics or themes rather than on specific language targets. The author continues that the learners concentrate on reaching the targets with opportunities to recycle known language and skills in a relatively natural context. Meanwhile, Fried-Booth (1986) states that that most organized language learning takes place in the classroom and there is often a gap between the language the students are taught and the language they in fact require. The researcher concludes that project work can help to bridge the gap.

In a similar vein, Hedge (2000) defines that project are extended tasks which usually integrate language skills by means of numbers of activities. These activities combine in working towards an agreed goal and may include the following: planning; gathering information through reading, listening, interviewing, and observing; group discussion of the information, problem solving; oral and written reporting; and display. Meanwhile, Fried-Booth (2002) explains that project work is student-centered and driven by the need to create an end-product, which brings opportunities for students to develop their confidence and independence and to work together in a real-world environment by collaborating on a task which they have defined for themselves and which has not been externally imposed.

It can be noticed that the scholars make attempts to state the most prominent and succinct features of project work. And while describing this approach, various advantages in relations to language education are pointed out such as enhancing positive psychology, stimulating independent and active learning, and collaborating in multi-skills learning tasks.

#### 3.2. Characteristics of Project Work

Many proponents of project work (Alan and Stoller, 2005; Fried-Booth, 2002; Haines, 1989; Sheppard and Stoller, 1995; and Stoller (2002) agree on six following characteristics of project work. First, project work prioritizes the content rather than the language. Thus, it can be considered as a mirror of the real world, which includes topics of interest to students. Second, students will do the main tasks in a project, and teachers will give guidance and support where necessary. Third, during the process, students can work individually or cooperatively in small groups, or as a whole class to share resources, ideas, and expertise to complete the project. Fourth, students integrate diverse skills through conducting tasks. Fifth, project work is usually designed with end products as the outcome, for example, an oral presentation, a poster session, a bulletin-board display, a report, or a stage performance. Project work not only develops students' language accuracy through the process stage, but also language fluency through the product stage. Finally, project work is potentially motivating, stimulating, empowering, and challenging. It usually results in building student

confidence, self-esteem, and autonomy as well as improving students' language skills, content learning, and cognitive abilities.

Focusing on the activities in projects, Hutchinson (1991), a great promoter of project work, emphasizes four characteristics of project work: (1) hard work: - Each project is a result of a lot of hard work. The authors of the projects have to carry out various activities and put all the parts together to form a coherent presentation; (2) creative - Projects are creative in two aspects: contents and language. The teacher shall see each project as unique piece of communication; (3) personal: - The aspect of creativity makes the project very personal. The students invest a lot of themselves into their work; and (4) adaptable: - Project work can be used with all ages at every level of language. The choice of activities is not limited, and each topic can be adapted for the specific purposes of a particular group of learners.

According to Simpson (2011), educators who studied and applied project-based learning share a consensus on a range of features. They include: (a) complex explorations over a period of time; (b) a student-centered learning activity whereby students plan, complete and present the task; (c) challenging questions, problems, or topics of student interest which become the center of the project and the learning process; (d) the de-emphasis of teacher-directed activities; (e) frequent feedback from peers and facilitators, and an opportunity to share resources, ideas and expertise through the whole process in the classroom; (f) hands-on activities and the use of authentic resources and technologies; (g) a collaborative learning environment rather than a competitive one; (h) the use of a variety of skills such as social skills and management skills; (i) the use of effort in connecting ideas and acquiring new skills during different stages of projects; (j) the productions of meaningful artifacts that can be shared with peers, teachers, and experts in a public presentation; and (k) assessment in both the process of working from the first stage to the last stage and the finished project.

Capturing the uniqueness of project-based learning, Thomas (2000) suggests five features to answer the question 'what must a project have to be considered an instance of project-based learning?' The criteria are as follows: centrality, driving question, constructive investigations, autonomy, and realism. As for *centrality*, projects can be the central teaching strategy; learners encounter and learn the main concepts of a discipline through the projects. In terms of *driving question*, projects focus on questions or problems that drive learners to encounter and learn the central concepts and principles of a discipline. When attempting to pursue the questions, activities, products and performances occupy learners' time. Regarding *constructive investigations*, projects involve learners in a constructive investigation. An investigation is a goal-directed process that involves inquiry, knowledge building, and resolution. The central activities of the project should involve the transformation and construction of knowledge (new understandings and new skills) on the part of the learner. With *autonomy*, projects are student driven. They include learners' choices and responsibility rather than traditional instruction where teachers decide the learning contents and methods. Concerning *realism*, projects are realistic. Projects embody some characteristics that give them the feature of authenticity to the learners. These characteristics may be reflected in the topic, the tasks, the roles played by the learners, or the final product.

### 3.3. Types of Project Work

Project work is diversely conceptualized by different language researchers. It is found that projects are categorized based on the sequences of activities or on the data collection techniques or on the ways of presentation of the final project product.

According to the nature and sequencing of project-related activities, there are three types of projects: structured projects, unstructured projects, and semi-structured projects (Stoller, 1997). Structured projects are determined, specified, and organized by the teacher in terms of topics, materials, methodology and presentation. Unstructured projects are defined largely by students themselves. Semi-structured projects are defined and organized in part by the teacher and in part by the student.

Based on data collection techniques and sources of information, Legutke and Thomas (1991) proposed five types: research projects, text projects, correspondence projects, survey projects, and encounter projects. Research projects necessitate the gathering of information through library research. Text projects involve encounters with 'texts' (e.g., literature, reports, news media, video and audio material, or computer-based information) rather than people. Correspondence projects require communication with individuals (or businesses, governmental agencies, schools, or chambers of commerce) to solicit information by means of letters, faxes, phone calls, or electronic mail. Survey projects entail creating a survey instrument and then collecting and analyzing data from 'informants.' Encounter projects result in face-to-face contact with guest speakers or individuals outside the classroom.

In terms of how final products are presented, there are also three types of projects production projects, performance projects, and organizational projects (Haines, 1989). Production projects involve the creation of bulletin board displays, videos, radio programs, poster sessions, written reports, photo essays, letters, handbooks, brochures, banquet menus, travel itineraries, and so forth. Performance projects can take shape as staged debates, oral presentations, theatrical performances, food fairs, or fashion shows. Organizational projects entail the planning and formation of a club, conversation table, or conversation partner program.

### 3.4. Stages of Project Work

There exists a variety of models in the literature describing the process of project work. And it can be noticed that all the models feature the flexibility and applicability in practice. Each model consists of several steps. However, the commonly found models often share the following steps: topic selecting, topic selecting, planning, researching and products-making, products-presenting, and products-evaluating (Wrigley, 1998). In what follows there will be a presentation of the frameworks which are recurrent in the literature. The frameworks are Fried-Booth's (1986),

Kalabzova's (2015), Legutke and Thomas's (1991), Papandreou's (1994), Sheppard and Stoller's (1995), Stoller's (2002), and Stoller's (2012).

Depending on the venues where projects are carried out, Fried-Booth (1986) maintains that a project moves through three stages: beginning in the classroom, moving out into the world, and return back to the classroom. These stages correspond respectively to: (1) *classroom planning* (in collaboration with their teachers, learners discuss the content and the scope of the project); (2) *carrying out the project* (learners move out of the class setting to complete the tasks they planned like conducting interviews and collecting data); and (3) *reviewing and monitoring the work* (it includes discussions and feedback sessions to evaluate the project). Katz and Chard (1989), in a similar way, present a process of several steps for the project to be successfully completed. However, the framework is not detailed like the model offered by Fried-Booth (1986). Even though it seems to include the common phases found in most projects such as selecting a topic, making plans, researching and developing end-products.

In terms of the aims of each stage, Legutke and Thomas (1993) suggest a model of project work with 6 stages: (1) *Opening*: This first stage includes the following aims: to develop positive group dynamics; to introduce learners to communicative approach; to give learners personal experience of using multimedia; to introduce the live community as a resource base for language learning where appropriate; and to introduce textual data (content materials, process materials) for research activities. (2) *Topic orientation*: At this stage students focus on a possible topic and explore the interest value in terms of insights into the topic, and situations and opportunities for language practice and development. (3) *Research and data collection*: This is the longest and the most intensive part of the project and it includes the planning and other procedures needed to complete the target task, practicing required skills and data collection. (4) *Preparation of data presentation*: In this stage, students deal with a new round of decision making which often leads to a reallocation of roles within a freshly formed production team. They have to decide what to do with the collected data in regard with the end product and for whom it will be intended. (5) *Presentation*: The objectives in this stage are to present information to a live audience using the appropriate media; and to structure and direct the event and interact with the audience. At this stage, the students present their end product of the project. And (6) *Evaluation*: According to Legutke and Thomas (1991, p.180), a concluding evaluation stage involve an overall evaluation of topic understanding, group and teacher interaction, procedural organization, input materials, language gains and deficits, examples of learner work, and possible by-products. Teachers can use various forms of evaluation, such as the students can write diaries, reports, or self-reflection about what they have learnt and their experience during working on the project. Students can determine the criteria for success and failure and discuss about their individual work in the project.

Stressing the activities undertaken in each stage, Papandreou (1994) provides a model describing the process of project work. The model is also composed of six stages: (1) *Preparation*: At this stage, teachers introduce the topic. Students have the chance to discuss the subject with their instructor and ask for further information. (2) *Planning*: During this stage, planning starts on the various aspects of the project. These include identifying sources, determining the mode for collecting and analyzing information, assigning individual tasks to team members, etc. (3) *Research*: During this stage, learners individually or in groups gather information from different sources like books, journals or libraries. Some tools may be used during stage like interviews and questionnaires. (4) *Conclusion*: Before reaching this phase, learners analyze the collected data. (5) *Presentation*: Once the learners have gone through the previous stages, they are ready to present their final work to the whole class. (6) *Evaluation*: During this final stage, the teacher considers his learners' efforts. Starting from the arguments that project work possesses all characteristics effective for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) settings (authentic language use, a focus on language at the discourse rather than the sentence level, authentic tasks, and learner centeredness). Sheppard and Stoller (1995) offer an eight-step sequence of activities for conducting project work. In addition to the six steps constituting Papandreou's model, there are two new steps: (1) Define the theme; (2) Determine the outcome; (3) Structure the project; (4) Identify language skills and strategies; (5) Gather information; (6) Compile and analyze information; (7) Present final product; (8) Evaluate the project.

Moving out from the ESP settings and focusing more on promoting language and content, Stoller (2002) proposes a ten-step model to be developed in the language classroom. It is recognized that the new 10-step model gives an easy-to-manage structure and guides teachers and students in developing meaningful projects. Stoller (2002) states that the new model will help students complete their projects successfully and the supportive intervention steps (Step 4, Step 6, and Step 8) are optional in teacher education courses, depending on the language proficiency and needs of teachers-in-training. The ten steps are (1) Students and instructor agree on a theme for the project; (2) Students and instructor determine the final outcomes of the project; (3) Students and instructor structure the project; (4) Instructor prepares students for the demands of information gathering; (5) Students gather information; (6) Instructor prepares students to compile and analyze data; (7) Students compile and analyze information; (8) Instructor prepares students for the language demands of the final activity; (9) Students present the final product; (10) Students evaluate the project.

#### 4. Project Work to Develop Aspects of Autonomy in Language Learning

Drawing on the discussions above, project work is believed to a tool which can be applied in the syllabus to promote four perspectives of learner autonomy: technical, psychological, political-critical, and socio-cultural. As discussed above, the technical aspect of learner autonomy features learners' employment of learning skills and the exploitation of the learning resources. Looking at the features of project work, it can be noticed that projects can enhance this aspect of learner autonomy. Project work involves a number of planned activities through different stages (Brown et al, 1993). Joining a project means that students need to integrate diverse skills and strategies through conducting tasks. At the same time, the students are put in a particular learning situation in which they have to find ways to make the most of

the learning resources available to achieve the set learning goals. This way, project work will enhance the technical perspective of learner autonomy.

As for the psychological aspect of learner autonomy, two elements commonly recognized are attitudes and motivation. Project work can be applied in learning to stimulate this aspect. First, project work means working together on the topics of interest to students (Simpson, 2011). This is definitely the extrinsic motivation for students. Students choose the topics as are interested in the topics. By doing so, students find their learning enjoyable (Cherry, 2020). And project work is student-centered and driven by the need to create an end-product. These features bring chances for students to be more motivated, confident and independent in learning (Fried-Booth, 2002). At the same time, the shared experience in doing the learning activities throughout projects will bring joy and fun (Shaffer, 2018).

With the political-critical aspect of learner autonomy, as discussed above, it features learners' choice of learning contents and choice of learning methods. Project work obviously can provide opportunities for learners to exercise their freedom in choosing learning contents and learning methods. Benson (2001) states that project-based learning is the weak version in the curriculum-based approach in which learners can exercise the rights in learning. In project work, learners participate in choosing the contents of projects, the forms of input and output, and methods of inquiry. Therefore, project work provides learners opportunities to express their voices, and make decisions. In other words, the political-critical perspective of learner autonomy can be developed in project work.

Regarding the socio-cultural aspect of learner autonomy, project work can obviously stimulate interaction and collaboration. It is pointed out above, project work in its nature features collaborative teamwork and cooperative working in groups (Stoller, 2002; Hedge, 2000). Hence, project work will create a learning environment that stimulates interaction, communication and collaboration. It is evident right from the first stage of project work that students work together in building the projects, carrying out the project activities, and presenting the outcome products. This participation brings students chances to interact and cooperate with each other until the completion of projects.

With the potential improvements discussed above, project work can be chosen to be as an intervention tool in the process syllabus to enhance learner autonomy. The implementation of project work is expected to help students to: access to learning resources in a more effective way; employ a wider range of learning skills or strategies; exhibit positive attitude towards learning English; be more motivated in learning and be aware of their roles and the learning process better, have more choices in learning; and have more chances to interact and collaborate in learning.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has provided a systematic review of the literature on learner autonomy and project work as a means to promote learner autonomy. It started with the presentation of learner autonomy in four aspects: technical, psychological, political-critical, and socio-cultural. Along with the description of the aspects, the paper is also devoted to presenting project work and its rationale for application to promote learner autonomy. The discussions on project work demonstrated its definitions, characteristics, types, and stages of a project. The paper also specifies the rationale for choosing project-based learning as an approach to enhance learner autonomy in the four aspects. Hopefully, all the presentations in this paper will support educators and practitioners to gain a better understanding of aspects of learner autonomy and project work, and the rationale of using project work to stimulate learner autonomy.

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