Modernism and Postmodernism Concepts in Education: Its Impact on EFL Students' Autonomy and Implication for EFL Teachers

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Abstract

Promoting learner autonomy is considered a vital concern to English Foreign Language (EFL) learners; so far, many attempts related to develop learner autonomy in various concepts. The present study aimed at examining the effect of Postmodernism and Modernism concepts on EFL learners. This study was carried out in the course of study at a high school in Iran. Accordingly, 60 learners between 16 and 17 years old, randomly chosen from a larger participant of 80 EFL learners concerning their achievement on the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), attending high school in Iran. The selected participants have been assigned into two groups (i.e., postmodernism and modernism concepts, respectively). Each group involved 30 participants. The control group (n=30) is usually taught through *modernism concepts*, whereas the experimental group (n=30) is exposed to *postmodernism concepts*. Over the course of this present study, the data was gathered through a pre-test and post-test learner autonomy questionnaire. The t-test statistical procedure was utilized for the research question. The findings of the result showed that postmodernism concepts significantly performed better than the modernism concepts group in the learner autonomy. This study showed that all those engaged in language teaching and learning could process to possess a better perspective on developing efficient instructions.

Keywords: *Autonomy, Learners' autonomy, Postmodernism Concept, Modernism Concept, Finch (2006)'s Taxonomy*

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decades, postmodernism has been regarded as an important notion to be discussed. There are various famous scholars and researchers who have been spilled against postmodern ideology. For example, Kirby (2006) considers the postmodern world as a type of pseudo-modernism—a return to the existence of modernity but without its quality.

To Kirby (2006), postmodernism is dead and buried. In this regard, Chomsky (1996) claims that postmodernism is without meaning since it does not add anything to our analytical or empirical knowledge. According to Chomsky (1996), postmodernists are charlatans. Chomsky (1996) also mentions that postmodernism will have significant and positive impacts on the third world. Chomsky (1996) also believes that the third world requires serious intellectuals to take part in the existing struggles instead of ranting about postmodern absurdities. In addition, Guattari (1984, as cited in Bazargani & Larsari, 2015) claims that postmodernist visions of the world were not flexible enough to look for explanations in psychological, social, and environmental backgrounds at the same time. In sum, to the critics of postmodernism, it "covers an ill-defined galaxy of ideas—ranging from art and architecture to the social sciences and philosophy" (Sokal & Bricmont, 1998, p. 182).

Journal of English as A Foreign Language Teaching and Research (JEFLTR)
Vol. 2 (1), 59-69
Modernism and Postmodernism Concepts in Education: Its Impact on EFL Students' Autonomy and Implication for EFL Teachers
Vahid Norouzi Larsari; Radka Wildová

In other words, learning a foreign language independently and autonomously has attracted the attention of a great number of teachers and educators for many years. There are many variables for autonomous learning; however, willingness and taking responsibility for the learning tasks are the two factors of autonomous learning (Salimi & Nowrozi larsari, 2015).

There is this widely held belief that the Iranians, like many Asian nationalities (Nakata, 2011), are experiencing the transition age from a traditional culture that favors a judicious mind to the modern era when creativity and self-reliance are receiving their deserved credit. Nakata (2011) cites Esaki's (2002) statement that learners in such a transit move from being taught with a focus on memorization and remembering to self-teaching through questioning, considering, searching, and doing. Iran, as does Japan, for instance, has its culture rooted in a collectivist basis where people see themselves primarily as group members with strong group loyalty and interdependence. As Holliday (2007, p. 20) maintains, for the collectivists, "silence is a virtue, the face is derived from the group where members are satisfied with very few choices." Here the researcher is to know if the mischief Iranian language learners experience has anything to do with their autonomy level. As Nakata (2011) maintains, success in such a situation is the extent to which personal autonomy is achieved because it is the key to motivation, and motivation is a grand driving force for creative performance (as Cited in Norouzi Larsari, 2022).

Farahani (2014), with 405 EFL learners in a language institute in Iran, indicated Iranian EFL learners' readiness for autonomous learning. She conducted semi-structured interviews, distributed questionnaires, and observed a number of classrooms to scrutinize the perceptions of learners about their readiness for autonomy. The results of her study indicated a gap between learners' perceptions of autonomous learning and their actual classroom practices. However, in this study researcher has attempted to apply efficient strategies for improving the language institute's curriculum and language instructors and learners to reach the highest language knowledge level.

Daunwong (2007) states that these two factors are dealt with metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive experiences. He points out Fleming and Walls (1998), who claim that metacognitive knowledge helps learners to have the ability to plan, monitor, manage and reflect on the process of language. Dafei (2007) studied the relationship between autonomy and learning a language and represented that learner autonomy influences students' language proficiency. In educational contexts, the concept of autonomy has gotten a lot of attention. Indeed, this ability should come true to have better learning. Based on Little (1991), autonomy is "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts" (p.4). To show different features of the autonomous learner in the process of language learning, it is important to study different definitions and aspects of learner autonomy (Norouzi larsari, 2011). The first definition presented by Holec is "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (as cited in little, 2006, p.1). As Benson (1997) states, autonomy may be used in five different settings. First, autonomy is used in conditions where learners study on their own. The second condition is for those skills and capacities that may be utilized in self-directed learning, and the third setting is for a natural ability that is forbidden by institutional education. The next condition is enhancing the responsibility of learning on their own, and the last one is for the right of learners to recognize the orientation of their own learning and ability to assess their performance. Little (1991) felt that "learner autonomy does not mean that the

Journal of English as A Foreign Language Teaching and Research (JEFLTR)
Vol. 2 (1), 59-69
Modernism and Postmodernism Concepts in Education: Its Impact on EFL Students' Autonomy and Implication for EFL Teachers
Vahid Norouzi Larsari; Radka Wildová

teacher becomes redundant, abdicating his/her control over what is transpiring in the language learning process" (p.4). The aim of the empirical research paper is to investigate whether modernism and postmodernism concepts for EFL learners have any influence on improving their learner autonomy or not.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Definition of autonomy

Many researchers tried to define the term "*autonomy*" from various aspects. In an educational context, researchers have different opinions on autonomy (Zareai, 2009). For example, according to Richards and Schmidt (2002), autonomy is the principle in which the learners should assume a range of responsibility for what they learn and how they learn. Zareai (2009) maintains that the term "*autonomy*'' and "*learner autonomy*" are intimate and familiar words within the context of language learning and teaching. The dictionary meaning of autonomy is "the ability to act and make decisions without being controlled by anyone else" (as Cited in, Zareai, 2009, p. 2). Several terms are often used to refer to the autonomy of the language learner: Self-management, self-learning, individualization, self-instruction, learning consciousness, learner-centeredness, learner independence, learning how to learn and independent language learning, and learning on an autonomous principle (Holec, 1981). The concept of autonomy has also been associated with the idea of self-sufficient learning, learner instruction, self-determination, interdependence, and individualization. Defining autonomy is very sophisticated; autonomy frequently has multiple different names, for example, self-regulatory learning, self-sufficient leaning, the learner-centered approach, and self-governing learning. There have been different interpretations relying on how autonomy is considered (Onozawa, 2010). Besides, the notion of autonomy has broadly been used in the area of ELT during the last decade. Various expressions such as individualization and then learner independence are more approved in the area of ELT because such terms refer more exactly to the practical interventions or conditions of teaching (Smith, 2008). Holec's (1981) seminal work entitled "*Autonomy and foreign language learning*" provided a definition of learner autonomy as the "ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p. 3). He also defined the definition of "*learner autonomy*" as follows:

> *"To have, and to hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e., determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedures of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.); evaluating what has been acquired"* (Holec, 1981; p. 3).

Postmodernism

Most definitions are hopelessly vague and often inconsistent with each other. There is a considerable amount of confusion about the terms: *modernity*, *modernism*, *post-modernity*, and *postmodernism*. Modernism and postmodernism have tended to be related to aesthetic and intellectual movements such as that in architecture and literature; modernity and post-modernity have tended to be used to refer to changes in social and economic institutions (Giddens, 1990). However, this is not a hard and fast distinction. Much of the talk about postmodernism has been related to social and economic change. Postmodernism is a late 20th-century movement in the areas including arts, architecture, and criticism which was a departure from modernism. Postmodernism includes skeptical interpretations of culture, literature, art, philosophy, history, economics, architecture, fiction, and literary criticism. Also,

Journal of English as A Foreign Language Teaching and Research (JEFLTR)
Vol. 2 (1), 59-69
Modernism and Postmodernism Concepts in Education: Its Impact on EFL Students' Autonomy and Implication for EFL Teachers
Vahid Norouzi Larsari; Radka Wildová

postmodernism is often associated with deconstruction and post-structuralism because its usage as a term gained significant popularity at the same time as twentieth-century post-structural thought.

The term *postmodernism* alludes both to the postmodern period and to a set of developments inside that period (primarily in craftsmanship, music, and writing) that responded to innovator propensities (Mary Webster's College Lexicon, 2004). Postmodernism incorporates doubtful basic translations of culture, writing, craftsmanship, logic, history, phonetics, financial matters, design, fiction, women's activist hypothesis, and scholarly feedback. Postmodernism is frequently related to schools of thought such as deconstruction and post-structuralism and logicians such as Jean-François Lyotard (1989), Jacques Derrida (1967), and Frederic Jameson (1991). Postmodernism incorporates doubtful basic translations of culture, writing, craftsmanship, reasoning, history, phonetics, financial matters, design, fiction, women's activist hypothesis, and scholarly feedback. Postmodernist educational concepts are mentioned as:

1. Crossing of borders (breaking down of barriers)
2. De-colonization (diversification and regionalism)
3. Decentralization (lateral, rather than hierarchical decision-making)
4. Deconstruction (questioning traditional assumptions about certainty, identity, and truth)
5. Eclecticism (the borrowing and mixing of features from different systems and fields)
6. Pastiche (imitating the previous works of others, often with satirical intent)
7. Relativism (conceptions of time, space, truth, and moral values are not absolute but are relative to the persons or groups holding them)
8. Self-contradiction (duplicity; the conscious making of self-undermining statements)
9. Self-reference and self-reflexiveness (use of meta-language and self-constructing forms).

Postmodernism describes a broad movement that improved in the mid-to-late 20th century across philosophy, the arts, architecture, and criticism, which marked a departure from modernism (Mura, 2012). While encompassing a broad range of ideas, postmodernism is typically defined by an attitude of skepticism, irony, or rejection toward grand narratives, ideologies, and various tenets of universalism, including objective concepts of reason, human nature, social progress, moral universalism, absolute truth, and objective reality (Duignan, 2004).

Empirical Studies
A number of studies have been conducted to investigate the correlation between learner autonomy in second language teaching and learning. In a study, Chan (2000) examined an action research project on ways and methods of developing learner autonomy in an ESL classroom. A sample of 15 first-year university students in a Bachelor of Arts in contemporary English at Hong Kong Polytechnic University was selected. Chan (2000) also carried out an autonomy-based English program. Students received a detailed explanation of the circumstance and purpose of this program, classroom procedures, and group learning tasks. The study found the degree and quantity to which learner autonomy was performed in the tertiary language classroom.

In another study, Kucuroglu (2000) evaluated the role of a learner-centered approach in language teaching in the promotion of learner autonomy through investigating the values and plan characteristics of a freshman year English course, namely English-2 suggested at Dogus University. The plan of the

Journal of English as A Foreign Language Teaching and Research (JEFLTR)
Vol. 2 (1), 59-69
**Modernism and Postmodernism Concepts in Education: Its Impact on EFL Students' Autonomy and Implication
for EFL Teachers**
Vahid Norouzi Larsari; Radka Wildová

model course included five focal characteristics: evaluation of learners' requirements, allowing learners' selections in learning, validity, and accuracy of textual resources, changing the roles of teachers and learners. This course, with the explained features above, could get students through the stages of performing academic research, helps them enhance their self-assurance in working on their own, and learn to accept the responsibility for their own learning. As a result, the model course developed learner autonomy with the values of communicative language teaching and learner-centeredness in language education.

METHODOLOGY
Subjects
The subjects of this research are students from High school in Tehran, Iran, with the range of 20 to 25 years old. There were 60 learners in the intermediate level who were given an Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) as the homogenization test. The participants are native speakers of Persian.

Instrumentations
Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT): Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was used to ascertain the homogeneity of the participants in terms of language proficiency and to make sure that all participants were intermediate EFL learners. The test consists of 60 multiple-choice items, and the test taker's level is evaluated by the number of questions they answer correctly. The test was divided into two parts: one part (Questions 1-40) dealt with grammar and vocabulary items that referred to all participants. Part two (Questions 41-60) was answered by the participants who finished the first part properly. To tap participants' level of English language proficiency level, an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (2004, Allen) was utilized to homogenize the participants in the study.

Learner Autonomy Questionnaire: The autonomy questionnaire was used to assess learners' autonomy after the administration of the OQPT test. The questionnaire was administered by Deng Dafei in a study titled "An Exploration of the Relationship between Learner Autonomy and English Proficiency" (2007). The questionnaire was originally designed and developed by Zhang & Li (2004, p. 23) and included 21 items. It includes two sections. One section includes 11 items through a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), and the other section is 10 items in multiple-choice format.

Data Collection Procedure
Over the course of this present study, the data was collected through a pre-test and post-test learner autonomy questionnaire. The length of the study was 14 sessions of 90 minutes twice a week, with the 10th session devoted to the mid-term exam and the last session to the final exam. Therefore, the participants in each group received 18 sessions of instruction. At the beginning of the study, 60 learners of the intermediate level at High School in Iran were selected through non-random selection after Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). Then, they were randomly divided into two groups. Each group included 30 participants. The participants were assured that the results of their responses to the questionnaire were going to be used just for research purposes, and they could receive the results of their personality traits in each questionnaire. Then, the researcher was given a pre-learner autonomy questionnaire to the students before teaching the treatments. The aim of the learner autonomy was to see how autonomous the participants were in learning English as a foreign language. In addition, its aim

Journal of English as A Foreign Language Teaching and Research (JEFLTR)
Vol. 2 (1), 59-69
Modernism and Postmodernism Concepts in Education: Its Impact on EFL Students' Autonomy and Implication
for EFL Teachers
Vahid Norouzi Larsari; Radka Wildová

was to measure their autonomy levels. The researcher taught the concepts of modernism and postmodernism to both the experimental group and control group. Here was teaching the concepts of modernism and postmodernism as follows (Finch, 2006):

Taxonomy of Finch (2006): Modernism and Postmodernism Concepts

Modern metanarratives	Postmodern metanarratives
High-stakes, standardized testing (Concentrate on the product of learning)	Relativistic focus on process; deconstruction of the standardized testing paradigm.
Structural syllabi (Totalization)	Deconstruction of propositional language learning concepts
Teacher-controlled learning (Totalization)	Decentralization, regionalism

After the intervention, the researcher distributed the same learner autonomy questionnaire as a post-test to these groups to see which group of modernist or postmodernist class outperforms another class in terms of autonomy level.

Data Analysis
The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (version 22). To determine whether modernism and postmodernism concepts to EFL learners has any influence on promoting their learner autonomy or not, the scores of the pre-test and post-test were obtained, then the mean and standard deviation of the scores of 60 participants were calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
This empirical research is to examine the effect of postmodernism and modernism concepts on learners. The data collection was meticulously conducted, and the data were entered into SPSS to calculate the statistical analyzes and address the research question and hypothesis of the current research.

Analysis of the Research Question
To answer the research question, the researcher utilized two independent sample t-tests, both pre-test, and post-test. The related descriptive statistics are given in Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics
Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics of Two Group's Scores on the Pre-test of Learner Autonomy

Group	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Postmodernism	30	23.00	4.331	-.126	-.841
Modernism	30	22.10	3.916	-.412	-.503

Journal of English as A Foreign Language Teaching and Research (JEFLTR)
Vol. 2 (1), 59-69
Modernism and Postmodernism Concepts in Education: Its Impact on EFL Students' Autonomy and Implication for EFL Teachers
Vahid Norouzi Larsari; Radka Wildová

Table 4.1 indicates that the mean and standard deviation of the postmodernism ($\bar{x}$ = 23.00, SD = 4.33) and Modernism ($\bar{x}$ = 22.10, SD = 3.91) on pre-test of learner autonomy.

Table 4.2: Independent Samples Test to Compare Two Groups' Scores on Learner Autonomy Pre-test

Levene's Test for Variances			T-test for Means			
Factor	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed	.501	.482	.844	58	.402	.900
Equal variances not assumed			.844	57.421	.402	.900

As it is shown, the results of the independent *t*-test demonstrated that there was not any statistically significant difference (t (58) = .84, p> .05) in learner autonomy scores for postmodernism ($\bar{x}$ = 23) and modernism ($\bar{x}$ = 22.10) groups on the pre-test, where the *t* observed was less than the *t* critical of 2.04.

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics for Two Group's Scores on the Post-test of Learner Autonomy

Group	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Postmodernism	30	25.50	4.681	-.065	-1.004
Modernism	30	22.80	4.046	-.470	.045

As shown in Table 4.3, EFL learners in the postmodernism group ($\bar{x}$ = 25.50, SD = 4.68) have considerably higher performance than those in the modernism ($\bar{x}$ = 22.80, SD = 4.04) on post-test of learner autonomy. Further, the results of the independent *t*-test that was performed to compare modernism and postmodernism groups' reading comprehension scores on the post-test are laid out in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Independent Samples Test to Compare Two Groups' Scores on Learner Autonomy Post-test

ne's Test for Variances	T-test for Means

Journal of English as A Foreign Language Teaching and Research (JEFLTR)
Vol. 2 (1), 59-69
Modernism and Postmodernism Concepts in Education: Its Impact on EFL Students' Autonomy and Implication for EFL Teachers
Vahid Norouzi Larsari; Radka Wildová

Factor	*F*	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed	1.667	.202	2.390	58	.020	2.700
Equal variances not assumed			2.390	56.810	.020	2.700

The Independent *t*-test in Table 4.4 detected a remarkably strong discrepancy (*t (58)* = 2.39, *p*< .05) in learner autonomy scores for postmodernism ($\bar{x}$ = 25.50) and modernism ($\bar{x}$ = 22.80) groups on the post-test, where the *t* observed was greater than the *t* critical of 2.04, with the mean difference of 2.70 out of 40. As a result, it was concluded that postmodernism concepts had a remarkably stronger influence on the learner autonomy of EFL learners in comparison to modernism concepts. In this regard, the researcher used a paired sample *t*-test (or matched test) to check the reading comprehension means obtained on the pre-test to post-test in each group. Because the two sets of scores did not violate the assumptions of Parametric Analysis in each group, the researcher performed a parametric paired sample *t*-test, or not nonparametric Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used. The results of this *t*-test have been given in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Paired Samples Test to compare each Group's Means on the Pre-test and Post-test of Learner autonomy

Group	Mean	*SD*	*T*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Postmodernism	2.50	4.65	2.94	29	.006	.763	4.237
Modernism	.700	2.27	1.68	29	.103	-.150	1.550

As shown in Table 4.5, Paired samples *t*-test results indicated that there was a statistically significant increase (*t (29)* = 2.94, *p* < .01 (two-tailed)) in learner autonomy scores from pre-test (*M* = 23, *SD* = 4.33) to post-test (*M* = 25.50, *SD* = 4.68) in the postmodernism concepts. In fact, the mean increase in learner autonomy scores was 2.50 out of 40. Quite reverse, paired samples *t*-test failed to find any statistically significant increase (*t (29)* = 1.68, *p* > .05 (two-tailed)) in learner autonomy scores from pre-test (*M* = 22.10, *SD* = 3.91) to post-test (*M* = 22.80, *SD* = 4.04) in the modernism concepts. Moreover, we found that in comparison to modernism, postmodernism concepts had a much stronger influence on the students' autonomy of Iranian EFL learners.

CONCLUSION
With respect to the interpretation of the results, the researcher now turns to the conclusion he has come up with and regards what EFL teachers should actually do to facilitate their learners' learner autonomy (Norouzi larsari, 2021). To sum up, this research argues that learner autonomy is the most

Journal of English as A Foreign Language Teaching and Research (JEFLTR)
Vol. 2 (1), 59-69
Modernism and Postmodernism Concepts in Education: Its Impact on EFL Students' Autonomy and Implication for EFL Teachers
Vahid Norouzi Larsari; Radka Wildová

important concept inside the classroom because it has a great role in improving the learners' language knowledge, motivation, and self-efficacy. On the other hand, applying learner autonomy helps students to feel more confident to formulate their own findings. In addition, the researcher designated a better understanding of autonomy and its effects on language knowledge and learners' success, on their academic studies in general, and on their language learning process in specific can help language instructors and curriculum developers to find and present new ways of promoting these traits and help the learners reach their main language learning objectives. Getting the best use of these implicit qualities can be so rewarding and helpful for learners on their way to reaching ultimate success.

Moreover, autonomy has the following advantages:
➢ It leads to gaining a sense of responsibility (Richards & Schnidt, 2002).
➢ Autonomy improves the learner's self-direction and his/her progress in the classroom (Nedzinskatie et al., 2006).
➢ Autonomy also brings independency to the individuals (Birjandi & Tamjid, 2011).

Pedagogical Implications

It is hoped that the findings of this study motivate teachers to apply cognitive strategies in language teaching and enhance the learners' attitude regarding the use of these strategies in the classroom. This study might support teachers by encouraging the use of surveys to determine what motivates and reaches each student in the classroom through brainstorming and outlining while improving writing performance. Teachers could then construct lessons to encourage the complete classroom and to include more students without leaving some other students behind. The research sought ways that can both enhance students' writing skills and build up their positive perceptions of learning the language. The brainstorming and outlining strategies are chosen to solve students' difficulties in learning English language skills. The research in this study could encourage English.

Teachers to redirect struggling students not only for a class or a semester but also to motivate students to use their cognitive abilities to be successful in their whole life. The research in this study could encourage English teachers to focus on learner autonomy and postmodernism concepts, and based on the researcher's own perceptions and observations of students' learning attitudes towards EFL learning, such as teacher-dependence and teacher-centered education and lack of self-initiation, the researcher has decided to conduct this study. The purpose of this study is to focus on the degree of autonomy and language learning among learners, review the current theory and practices of fostering learner autonomy and self-initiation in a foreign language, and investigate the characteristics of autonomous learners in English classrooms. At the same time, the present study will examine the possible relationship between autonomy and language proficiency.

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Journal of English as A Foreign Language Teaching and Research (JEFLTR)
Vol. 2 (1), 59-69
Modernism and Postmodernism Concepts in Education: Its Impact on EFL Students' Autonomy and Implication for EFL Teachers
Vahid Norouzi Larsari; Radka Wildová

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Journal of English as A Foreign Language Teaching and Research (JEFLTR)
Vol. 2 (1), 59-69
Modernism and Postmodernism Concepts in Education: Its Impact on EFL Students' Autonomy and Implication for EFL Teachers
Vahid Norouzi Larsari; Radka Wildová

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