

## **The Desirability and Feasibility in Fostering Learner Autonomy from ESL Lecturers' Perspectives at Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia**

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to investigate the desirability and feasibility in fostering learner autonomy (LA) from ESL lecturers' perspectives in teacher training context. A number of 207 ESL lecturers from Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) campuses took part in this study. A questionnaire designed by Borg and Busaidi (2012) was adapted for data collection. The data were analysed descriptively in forms of frequencies and percentages. The analysis revealed that majority of ESL lecturers believed that their students were autonomous. They also perceived that it was more desirable than feasible for the two aspects measured in LA: i) learners' involvement in decision-making and ii) learners' abilities in all seven (7) items. As for involving learners in decision-making, the ESL lecturers agreed that kinds of tasks, activities and topics discussed were the most desirable and feasible aspects while objectives for the course and teaching methods were the least desirable and the least feasible aspects too. In terms of learners' abilities, two skills; to learn independently and to learn co-operatively were the most desirable by the ESL lecturers while evaluating their own learning was the least feasible. From the findings, it can be implied that the ESL lecturers felt positive to allow their students to be involved in decision-making regarding their learning in most aspects. With the fact of higher desirability and feasibility in most aspects for learners' involvement in decision-making and learners' abilities, this reflected that the ESL lecturers believed that their students are autonomous learners and can be more autonomous.

**Keywords:** desirability, feasibility, learner autonomy, ESL lecturers, teacher training

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Much has been researched and published regarding learner autonomy (LA), particularly in the context of language learning, to investigate its impact, benefits, strategies used, relationships with other variables, and many more in different contexts of study. Learner autonomy is a term used to describe a learner's ability to direct his or her own learning. The concept of autonomous language learning (ALL) is a transition from traditional, teacher-centered to unconventional learner-centered learning that allows the learners to be completely engaged and responsible in the learning process. However, this does not imply that they are fully independent on their own. Learning is co-constructed, and the teachers play a vital part

in initiating the process. The goal of learning, according to Benson (2007), is to create autonomous learners. With the advent of 21st century learning and 4th Industrial Revolution, most ESL teachers appear to desire ideal and authentic learning that would reflect on the learners' autonomy, not just in language learning but as well as in other aspects of life too.

The theory of learner autonomy has been developed in second language (L2) learning for more than four decades. In 1981, Holec coined the phrase "learner autonomy," which refers to the "ability to manage one's own learning" (p.3). Following his popular definition, many attempts to define autonomy were made. Little (1991) defined autonomy as "a capacity for detachment, rational thinking, decision making, and autonomous action" (p.4), while Littlewood (1999) defined autonomy as "the ability and desire of the learner to make decisions independently" (p. 427). Learner autonomy, according to Benson (2013), is described as "the ability to exert control over one's own learning" (p. 61). Despite the various meanings and interpretations of LA in the literature, in this study, LA refers to one's ability and willingness to take control and be responsible for their own learning and make decisions in areas such as goal setting, planning, monitoring, and measuring their own progress, with some or little guidance from the teachers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There is more common recognition of learner autonomy in the current education field as many scholars have agreed that LA will produce a positive trait of language learners and a significantly influenced to successful language learning. Several studies in relation to learner autonomy have been conducted in various contexts, but few have addressed teachers' perspectives on LA and what it entails from the language teachers' perspectives (Dang, 2012; Summer, 2010; Chitashvili, 2007). Learner autonomy is a key element of second language learning, as it allows both teachers and students to become more successful partners in the learning process. Learner autonomy can be traced back to the philosophical ideas of autonomy and equality, as well as the early 1980s work of the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Initiative. Holec (1981) defined learner autonomy as "the ability to be responsible for one's own learning" and there were more definitions on LA.

Despite of numerous studies conducted on LA, there have been limited studies conducted focusing in the areas of investigating the lecturers' perception regarding their students' LA, as well as the desirability and feasibility in promoting LA from the ESL lecturers' perspectives in teacher training context. Since lecturers play vital roles in fostering LA in this tertiary level of education, addressing these variables in this field has a major impact. It takes a greater significance in this study to explore from the ESL lecturers' perspectives because they are not only teaching and their students ESL, but they are also training teacher trainees who will soon becoming English teachers serving in primary schools nationwide once graduated.

Few studies done in Asian context have revealed interesting facts regarding the desirability and feasibility in fostering LA. In China, despite the strong agreement on the importance and the desirability in promoting LA to their students, the participants in Keuk and Heng's (2016) study also acknowledged the challenges they would have to face in implementing effective strategies. The findings are similar to a study conducted in Japan by Stroupe, Rundle and Tomita (2016) where the instructors of their study expressed strong positive agreement regarding the desirability to involve their learners in all seven aspects listed. However, despite the positive responses from the instructors regarding the feasibility of all the seven aspects listed, it was somewhat less decisive. The instructors have the most reservations regarding their learners' abilities to evaluate their own learning.

Meanwhile, a study conducted in Vietnam by Nguyen (2016) showed that LA skills were perceived by the participants (teachers) with higher desirability than the feasibility. This is similar to Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012b), in which the findings of the study also revealed a substantial variance in the teachers' assessments of the desirability and the feasibility in fostering the students' shift of control in decision-making for their own learning process and to improve the self-learning skills in relation to LA. Although they expressed a comparatively high degree of desirability to include their students in decision-making, the Vietnamese teachers believed that it was less feasible to include their students in decision-making related to curricular goals and assessment. This perception could be due of their lack of autonomy, and confidence regarding their students' LA abilities, and the context which imposed a top-down curriculum like that of Vietnam (Nguyen 2016).

Similar study about the extent to which they believed that their students could be involved in certain course-related decisions was also conducted in Philippines. The teachers in Ranosa, Madrino, Tarrayo, Tupas & Valdez's (2016) study were more positive about the desirability for their students' involvement than its feasibility. The interviewees also expressed positive opinions on their learners' capabilities to identify their own needs, strengths, and weaknesses, monitor their progress and evaluate their own learning. However, the teachers in Brunei were more pessimistic about both (Haji Othman & Woods 2016).

In Indonesia, Lengkanawati's (2016) study revealed interesting findings. Her participants agreed that their students were unable to make their own decisions in the learning. They claimed that their students still needed their assistance in the learning process particularly when they wanted to determine the objectives, to define the pace of learning, and selecting methods and techniques and most of them were very reliant on them in many aspects of learning. The majority of participants said that it was difficult for them to include students in the decision-making process about what they want to learn because all of the materials were set out in the programme and the teachers had to cover all of them.

However, the teachers in her study were more positive about the desirability in all aspects than they were about the feasibility. Based on the results of the initial survey questionnaire, the teachers were optimistic about the feasibility of developing learners' ability to identify their own needs, strengths, and weaknesses. The Indonesian teachers were doubtful about the ability of teachers and students to negotiate the course of the sessions. This was most likely because they believed that their students lacked knowledge of appropriate methodological options. In this regard, Benson (2016) remarked that "choices and decision-making are not the be-all-and-end-all of pedagogies" for LA, since there are other equally significant characteristics to consider, such as students' feedback. The support in terms of facilities for the learning process and learning outcomes.

In the Malaysian context, only a few studies on LA have been performed. A study conducted by Yunus and Arshad (2014) with English teachers revealed that they have positive attitudes toward autonomous language learning (ALL) in multi-cultural classrooms, particularly in terms of taking responsibility. However, the students were not all equally prepared for ALL, especially in terms of implementation. Hasim and Zakaria (2016) conducted a study to see how the ESL teachers perceived and practiced LA. From the study, it was found that despite the awareness of the ESL teachers of the concept of LA, some were unsure with the characteristics of autonomous learners. In 2017, Dwee and Anthony conducted a qualitative analysis to examine university teachers' attitudes and behaviours in fostering learner autonomy. The findings showed that, despite having a good understanding of what learner autonomy is, university teachers were uncertain about developing learner autonomy in classroom environments, and this was due to some possible challenges. These current studies

indicated that there are inconsistencies between perspectives and practices in developing LA from the teachers' perspectives and this warrants further research to be conducted.

There is a need to undertake this research since there are few studies focusing on these areas of inquiry from the perspectives of ESL lecturers in fostering LA at ITE. It is vital to gain additional insights and examine from the perspectives of ESL lecturers, as they are the ones who teach and educate soon-to-be future primary school English teachers nationwide with the fundamental pedagogical knowledge, as well as attitudes and skills. This study is aimed to gain a better understanding and insight into the current situation in relation to what ESL lecturers think about their students' LA, and the desirability and the feasibility of implementing LA in ESL classrooms at ITE. Three research questions were formulated in this regard:

- 1) To what extent do the ESL lecturers believe their students are autonomous?
- 2) How desirable and feasible do the ESL lecturers believe to involve students in decision-making?
- 3) How desirable and feasible do the ESL lecturers believe about their students' learning abilities?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a quantitative study aimed at defining the perspectives of ESL lecturers on their students' LA, as well as the desirability and feasibility in fostering learner autonomy in teacher training context, specifically at ITE in Malaysia. The quantitative data was analyzed with SPSS Version 23, and percentages and frequencies were determined to assess the extent of the participants' perceptions regarding their students' LA and the extent they felt on the desirability and feasibility in aspects related to learners' involvement in decision-making and learners' abilities.

### Participants and Setting

The participants in this study were ESL lecturers, who were teaching English at 27 Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) campuses nationwide. The demographic data of the participants that were collected were gender, age, qualifications, and teaching experience. The profile of the participants for this study is illustrated below in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of Participants in the Questionnaire (n=207)

Variables		Number	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	52	25.1
	Female	155	74.9
<b>Age</b>	31 - 40	15	7.2
	41 - 50	79	38.2
	51 - 60	113	54.6
<b>Qualification</b>	PhD	22	10.6
	Master	178	86.0
	Degree	7	3.4
<b>Teaching</b>	0 - 10	61	29.5
<b>Experience (years)</b>	11 - 20	95	45.9
	21 - 30	42	20.3
	31 - 40	9	4.3

As illustrated in Table 1, there were 207 questionnaire participants (52 male and 155 female), who aged from 31- to 60-year-old participated in Phase 1 of the study. The ESL lecturers' qualifications ranged from PhD Doctorates ( $n = 22$ ), Masters ( $n = 178$ ) and Bachelor ( $n = 7$ ). In terms of teaching experience of the participants, 61 participants (29.5%) had less than 10 years' experience, 95 participants (45.9%) had 11-20 years of teaching experience, 42 participants (20.3%) who had 21-30 years of teaching experience and nine participants (4.3%) with 31-38 years of teaching experience. The data from Table 1 revealed that 54.6% of the respondents aged from 51 to 60 years old and the majority (86%) of the participants qualified with Masters' Degree. In summary, it can be inferred that the participants are mostly experienced ESL lecturers. These ESL lecturers teach and train teacher trainees who will become ESL teachers in primary schools across the country for the next 25-30 years.

### **Research Instrument**

The present survey-based research aimed to identify the students' LA, the desirability and feasibility in fostering LA from the ESL lecturers' perspectives at Institute of Teacher Education in Malaysia. Questionnaires are generally regarded as a convenient method for gathering data in research. They have undeniable advantages over other instruments, including being relatively inexpensive to implement, which can be applied across a large geographical area and being able to be easily analysed. (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). In view of the need for a robust and comprehensive questionnaire, this research has adapted a questionnaire developed by Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012). It was divided into three sections: (1) ESL lecturers' perspectives regarding their students' LA, the desirability and feasibility in promoting LA in (2) students' involvement to make decisions in their learning, and (3) the learning abilities as autonomous learners.

In the questionnaire, firstly the ESL lecturers were asked about their students' LA and the desirability and feasibility to promote LA. Consisting of 2 parts, the first part asked the ESL lecturers on how they feel about their students' LA where the ESL lecturers were asked to rate their feelings in five (5) options of statements (Likert Scale) provided whether their students are autonomous learners as strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), unsure (3), agree (4) or strongly agree (5). Secondly, they were asked an open-ended question to provide the explanation for their initial answers. Meanwhile, the second part of the questionnaire was on the desirability and feasibility in promoting LA in 2 sets; one was on the learners' involvement in decision-making and second, on the learners' abilities as autonomous learners. There were seven (7) items regarding learners' involvement in decision-making and seven (7) items regarding the students' LA abilities. Four options were provided for each item for these 2 sections.

### **Data Collection**

After gaining the consent from Education Planning and Research Division (EPRD), the Rector of Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia (IPGM) and Directors of all 27 campuses from Institute of Teacher Education (ITE), the researcher invited all ESL lecturers from English Departments to participate in the survey via the Heads of English Language Department from each campus. The questionnaires were mailed to 280 ESL lecturers at 27 ITE campuses throughout Malaysia. From this group, 207 ESL lecturers completed the questionnaire fully, resulting in a response rate of approximately 74%. The data collection took four weeks to be completed. To ensure their confidentiality, the participants were numerically coded. Prior to the actual study, 30 ESL lecturers from three ITE campuses were involved in the pilot study conducted.

## Data Analysis

The data yielded by the questionnaire were analysed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics involving frequencies and percentages were used to answer the three research questions formulated for this study. The responses for the open-ended section were analysed using content analysis.

## RESULTS

This section presents the discussions of findings for RQ1, followed by RQ2 and RQ3 accordingly.

### RQ 1: ESL Lecturers' Perceptions about Their Students' Learner Autonomy

Part 1 of the questionnaire seeks for the ESL lecturers' views on their students' LA, followed by an open-ended question to justify their answers. The result for the first part is as presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The ESL Lecturers' Perceptions about their Students' Learner Autonomy

Statement	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	11	5.3
Unsure	2	1.0
Agree	171	82.6
Strongly Agree	23	11.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 displayed all the participants' responses, where they rated their agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for 'strongly disagree' to 5 for 'strongly agree'. Table 2 shows that majority of the participants agreed (82.6%) and strongly agreed (11.1%) that their students are autonomous. Only 11 participants (5.3%) disagreed with the statement that their students are autonomous learners and two participants (1%) responded "Unsure." In answering RQ1, ESL lecturers had diverse perspectives about their students' LA, with the majority believing that their students are autonomous learners.

The ESL lecturers were further asked in the following open-ended question in the questionnaire to provide the reasons for their answers. Regarding their students' LA, below were the positive responses given by the participants who claimed their students are autonomous:

- *They are able to source the information and use it in their presentations.*
- *The students are independent learners.*
- *They are mostly able to perform the tasks given on their own.*
- *Independent learners at this level.*
- *They realize that they are in higher education institutions which require them to be more independent.*
- *The tasks assigned to them usually require them to do the work independently.*

The responses given by the respondents above provided an overview of the current situation of ITE students' LA. According to ESL lecturers, their students have generally demonstrated traits of autonomous learners. Common themes such as 'independent learners', and 'work independently', have given us additional insights into the level to which their students are

autonomous. The findings reflected the ESL lecturers' comprehension of LA as well as their awareness of the characteristics of autonomous learners.

Although a higher percentage of participants expressed positive views regarding their students' LA, there were slightly negative and uncertain views too. This implies that their students may not have exhibited the characteristics of autonomous learners. It is worth noting that, despite the majority of ESL lecturers' positive perceptions, there were a few ESL lecturers who were unsure and disagreed that their pupils had a fair degree of LA. In response to this survey question, ESL lecturers provided the following reasons:

- *They still need guidance.*
- *Many of the students are not into LA, need a lot of guidance.*
- *Very dependent on getting hold to resources.*
- *They still need guidance within the parameters of the tasks.*
- *A bit too dependent on the lecturers*
- *Quite dependent sometimes due to attitude*
- *A teacher-dependent way of learning is already a culture to them.*
- *Restricted by exam-oriented curriculum.*
- *They are beginner learners. Their English language proficiency is low.*

These comments by ESL lecturers demonstrated that they were aware of, but not confident in their students' ability as autonomous learners. The reasons provided were largely regarding their students, who still require guidance from the ESL lecturers, being too reliant on the lecturers, and having low language proficiency, in addition to being exam oriented. This suggests that, despite most ESL lecturers' opinions on autonomous students at ITE, as they are adult learners (teacher trainees), such students nonetheless exist at ITE. These students were mostly new (Semester 1 students) who were accustomed to the spoon-feeding and exam-oriented culture during their prior primary and secondary school years. When students lack of LA, they are unable to make decisions in most aspects of their learning. As a result, they prefer to rely on their lecturers in many aspects of their learning and would not accept the responsibility of taking control of their own learning since they do not feel or see the justification for taking charge of their own learning. This would keep them in the situation they are in, especially if they are low-proficiency students who have not developed and will not develop the ability to learn on their own.

## **RQ 2: The Desirability and Feasibility of Learners' Involvement in Decision-making**

Part 2 of the questionnaires addressed two issues. Firstly, the ESL lecturers were asked to rate the desirability and feasibility of involving their students in the decision-making regarding their learning. Secondly, the ESL lecturers were asked to what extent they believed it was desirable and feasible for their students to acquire a set of abilities that are generally associated with autonomous learners.

There were seven items about learners' involvement in decision-making and seven items about learners' LA abilities. Table 3 shows the results for the comparison of the desirability and feasibility in the first issue, which is to involve their learners in decision-making. The seven items/aspects in Section 3 for decision-making in the learning by their students are: (1) the objectives of the course, (2) the kinds of tasks and activities they do, (3) the topics discussed, (4) how learning is assessed, (5) the teaching methods used, (6) the materials used and (7) the classroom management.

Table 3. The desirability and feasibility of learners' involvement in decision-making (%)

<i>Desirability and Feasibility of Learner's Involvement in Decision-Making</i>	<i>Desirability</i>				<i>Feasibility</i>			
	Undesirable	Slightly Desirable	Quite Desirable	Very Desirable	Unfeasible	Slightly Feasible	Quite Feasible	Very Feasible
<i>The objectives of the course</i>	5.3	15.0	48.3	31.4	20.3	28.5	42.5	8.7
<i>The kinds of tasks and activities they do</i>	1.0	4.8	52.7	41.5	2.4	21.7	53.1	22.7
<i>The topics discussed</i>	1.4	3.4	54.6	40.6	2.4	20.3	56.0	21.3
<i>How learning is assessed</i>	2.9	7.2	53.6	36.2	6.8	28.5	45.9	18.8
<i>The teaching methods used</i>	3.4	15.0	52.2	29.5	14.0	26.1	44.9	15.0
<i>The materials used</i>	1.0	8.7	55.6	34.8	2.4	28.5	51.2	17.9
<i>Classroom Management</i>	2.4	11.1	53.1	33.3	3.9	24.2	55.1	16.9

The responses from the survey, as illustrated in Table 3, revealed that the general perceptions of the ESL lecturers of all the seven (7) areas to involve learners in decision-making were more desirable than feasible. In terms of the desirability to involve their learners in decision-making, an overwhelming (95.2%) of the ESL lecturers reported that, the topics discussed to be the most desirable out of the seven aspects listed. The second aspect with high desirability to involve their learners in the decision-making is the kinds of tasks and activities they do (94.2%), followed by the materials used (90.4%), how learning is assessed (89.8%), classroom management (86.4%) and the teaching methods used (81.7%). However, the learners' involvement in making decisions in objectives of the course (79.7%) seem to be less desirable by ESL lecturers.

In terms of feasibility to involve their learners in decision-making, the result reported similar findings as in the desirability of the ESL lecturers; in which (77.3%) of the ESL lecturers reported the topics discussed and the kinds of tasks and activities they do (75.8%), to be the most feasible out of the seven aspects listed. The third aspect which they believe is feasible to involve their learners in the decision-making is classroom management (72%), followed by the materials used (69.1%), and how learning is assessed (64.7%). However, based on the responses by the ESL lecturers, the most unfeasible aspects to involve learners in decision-making are; the teaching methods used (59.9%) and objectives of the course (51.2%). It is interesting to note here that the ESL lecturers considered learners' involvement in decision-making, especially in the teaching methods used and objectives of the course were neither desirable nor feasible.

Unlike the two aspects, the topics discussed and the kinds of tasks and activities they do which seem to be desirable and feasible for the ESL lecturers to involve their students in making decisions, the teaching methods used, and objectives of the course can be considered as the most undesirable and unfeasible aspects from the ESL lecturers' perspectives. This could be due to the prescribed curriculum and objectives set by the Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia (IPGM) to be adhered to and implemented by the ESL lecturers. As regards to the teaching methods used, they might have some reservations as it should be the personal choice or preference of the ESL lecturers to decide, where they would situate or adapt their teaching methods according to the suitability in certain aspects to be considered such as the students'



needs, students' learning styles, level of proficiency and so on. Most ESL lecturers believed that involving their students in the topics discussed and the types of tasks and activities they do were the most desirable and feasible, indicating that they were willing to let their students to make choices in certain areas of their learning, giving them the opportunities and empowerment to become autonomous learners. The findings of a difference between the desirability and feasibility in this study echoes with the key finding of Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a) that "teachers were more positive about the desirability of students' involvement than they were about its feasibility" (p. 286).

### RQ 3: The Desirability and Feasibility of Learners' Abilities to be Autonomous

The second part of the section asked the ESL lecturers to rate on the desirability and feasibility on the learners' abilities in seven (7) aspects such as learn independently, learn co-operatively, evaluate their own learning, monitor their progress, identify their own weaknesses, identify their own strengths and finally, identify their own needs. All these skills or abilities are indicators of autonomous learners. The data gathered from the ESL lecturers is illustrated in Table 4 below.

Table 4. The desirability and feasibility of learners' abilities (%)

<i>Desirability and Feasibility of Learner's Involvement in Decision-Making</i>	<i>Desirability</i>				<i>Feasibility</i>			
	Undesirable	Slightly Desirable	Quite Desirable	Very Desirable	Unfeasible	Slightly Feasible	Quite Feasible	Very Feasible
<i>Identify their own needs</i>	1.4	5.8	42.0	50.7	2.9	17.4	52.2	27.5
<i>Identify their own strengths</i>	1.4	2.4	39.6	56.5	2.4	14.5	57.0	26.1
<i>Identify their own weaknesses</i>	1.0	2.9	41.1	55.1	1.9	15.0	55.6	27.5
<i>Monitor their progress</i>		4.3	43.6	52.2	.5	16.9	58.9	23.7
<i>Evaluate their own learning</i>		4.3	46.4	49.3	20.3	51.7	28.0	
<i>Learn co-operatively</i>	0.5	1.0	40.6	58.0		8.7	61.4	30.0
<i>Learn independently</i>		1.0	39.1	59.9	0.5	8.7	56.5	34.3

As shown in Table 4, the ESL lecturers place a higher desirability than the feasibility on the learners' LA skills in all seven aspects listed; (1) identify their own needs, (2) identify their own strengths, (3) identify their own weaknesses, (4) monitor their progress, (5) evaluate their own learning, (6) learn cooperatively and (7) learn independently.

In terms of desirability in developing the learners' abilities in actualizing LA, an overwhelming majority of the ESL lecturers believed that developing their learners' abilities to learn independently (99.0%) and to learn co-operatively (98.6%) were the most desirable followed by developing the abilities to identify their own weaknesses (96.2%) and identifying their own strengths (96.1%), which ranked the third and fourth aspects desirable by majority of the ESL lecturers. The result in Table 4 also revealed that majority of the ESL lecturers considered developing their students' abilities to monitor their own progress (95.8%) and evaluate their own learning (95.7%) as the fifth and sixth abilities desirable among other

aspects for their learners. A slightly different outlook was developing their learners' abilities to identify their own needs as its desirability recorded the lowest (92.7%) in comparison to other learners' LA abilities listed.

Regarding the feasibility in developing the learners' abilities in actualizing LA, an overwhelming majority of the ESL lecturers believed that developing their learners' abilities to learn co-operatively (91.4%) and to learn independently (90.8%) was the most feasible. This is followed by developing the abilities to identify their own weaknesses (83.1%) and identifying their own strengths (83.1%) considered as feasible by the ESL lecturers, which scoring the same result. The result in Table 4 also revealed that the ESL lecturers considered developing their students' abilities to monitor their own progress (82.6%) as the fifth ability feasible for their learners. A slightly different outlook was developing their learners' abilities to identify their own needs (79.7%) and to evaluate their own learning (28.0%) as its feasibility recorded the lowest in comparison to other learners' abilities listed in Table 4. This could be looked at as an indicator that most ESL lecturers still believed that some of their students could not identify their own needs for language learning and evaluating is the ESL lecturers' responsibility, not the learners'.

In conclusion, the ESL lecturers were more positive about the desirability of developing their learners' abilities to be autonomous learners than the feasibility in all seven aspects listed. It is interesting to note that developing their learners' abilities to learn co-operatively and to learn independently were considered the most desirable and the most feasible too. Meanwhile, the two aspects perceived as the most unfeasible in developing their learners' abilities were to identify their own needs and to evaluate their own learning from ESL lecturers' perspectives. This could be looked at as an indicator that while most ESL lecturers believed that evaluation could be empowered to the learners too, it is just yet feasible to be realized in this teacher training context.

## CONCLUSION

Investigating this from the lens of ESL lecturers' perspectives at Institute of Teacher Education has provided a detailed picture of their views, especially on their students' LA and the desirability and feasibility of developing LA at ITE. This study is significant, particularly in the context of teacher education in Malaysia, given the emphasis on ESL lecturers focusing on their efforts in facilitating their students to become independent and autonomous learners, as aspired in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB 2013-2025). Since there are few studies in LA in the context of teacher education, further research is needed. The findings in this study are like those of Borg and Busaidi (2012), in which they discovered a significant gap between the ESL lecturers' beliefs about how desirable and feasible to involve the students to make decisions in their learning and, especially in relation to teacher training context in Malaysia.

The findings from this study have revealed certain important implications for teaching and learning of English teacher training context. Firstly, successful autonomous language learning (ALL) can be realized when ESL lecturers are aware of their students' needs, capacities, potentials, aspirations, and desires. Furthermore, to produce quality teachers as aspired in MEB (2013-2025), it would be great for ITE to design the training programs that emphasize on the pedagogical knowledge and skills in fostering LA in terms of their teaching practices in TESL as their current students are the future ESL teachers who will be teaching in primary schools nationwide for the next 30-35 years.

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