The Effects of Extensive Reading Strategy Training on Enhancing First Year Undergraduate EFL Learners' Level of Autonomy

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Abstract—To better understand how extensive reading strategy training (ERST) affects the degree of learner autonomy (LA) in an EFL university setting, a mixed-method experimental study was conducted. The study's participants were split into two groups at random: experimental and control. While individuals who took part in the experimental group received ERST treatment, those who took part in the control group merely received conventional instruction. Data from both groups were gathered using pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, and an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to determine whether group variations in the degree of LA were caused by the ERST therapy. The experimental group also received a post-intervention questionnaire on views toward ERST, and descriptive statistics were used to examine the findings. Additionally, a thematic analysis was done on the information gathered through teacher-trainer interviews regarding how the treatment affected the students' attitudes and degree of autonomy. Results demonstrated that as compared to the control group, participants in the ERST treatment considerably increased their level of autonomy. Additionally, the experimental group ultimately displayed a very positive attitude regarding the therapy. In general, the study's findings showed that encouraging autonomy through ERST led to successful outcomes in the development of autonomous English language learners. To assist students to become lifelong autonomous learners, EFL teachers are expected to provide training on extensive reading strategies (ERS) by integrating them with communicative language courses.

Index Terms—attitude, extensive reading strategy, ERST, level of learner autonomy, reader autonomy

I. INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that an ER plays a crucial role in developing independent learners because today's society is more sensitive than ever to independence in all parts of their lives. One of the first definitions offered when ER is in question is reading a lot of specially crafted texts quickly for general understanding while paying close attention to the meaning in the target language (Bamford & Richard, 2004).

The use of ER in the classroom is more effective in boosting learning than the conventional approach, which focuses mostly on intensive reading, according to a significant body of research on the topic. Teachers had positive perspectives about the development of LA in language learning as facilitators, counselors, and helpful resources in ER education (Duong & Seepho, 2014). Students are pleased with the LA philosophy's implementation since it allows them to direct their learning (Balcikanli, 2010; Tok, 2011).

According to teacher candidates, finding one's learning strategies and developing one's explanations are two of the most suitable instructional tasks for boosting LA (Tok, 2011). A small amount of LA can encourage students to read for a variety of purposes and to develop into independent readers who will enjoy reading on their outside of the classroom (Hedge, 2003).

The significance of ER in language learning has been argued for by Day and Bamford (2002), Channuan (2012), Yamashita (2013), and Beglar and Hunt (2014). However, adapting the ideas to practice and observing their impact on the ground is still debatable in a distinct EFL learning culture, such as Ethiopia. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend how to use ER in the process of teaching and learning languages in the classroom to best provide learners with autonomy.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Learner Autonomy

By contrast, in ER instruction, teachers hold positive attitudes toward the promotion of LA in language learning as facilitators, counselors, and valuable resources (Duong & Seepho, 2014). Students are also positive about the implementation of the philosophy of LA (Balcikanli, 2010; Tok, 2011) because it allows them to take charge of their learning.

LA has been a critical issue over the last three decades, during which there has been heated debate over the concept of independent self-directed learning (Zarei, 2010). There are also several arguments in favor of producing autonomous learners. First, autonomous learners are more active and efficient in the process of language learning. Second, autonomous learners are more motivated to take part in various activities. And third, effective communication is achieved through language use, and one of the requirements of language use is that the learner is autonomous. According to Thanasolus (2000, p. 117), in the domain of educational psychology, perhaps the clearest definition that can be given to LA is "the learner's willingness and capacity to control or oversee her learning". In TEFL settings, this might be interpreted as the second language learners' desire to get involved and monitor their language learning. Thus, this requires the involvement of affective and metacognitive strategies in addition to cognitive ones.

Bell (2001) believed that ER offers teachers worldwide to encourage learners to engage in a focused and motivating reading program with the potential which leads them along a path to independence and resourcefulness in their reading and language learning. According to teacher candidates, 'finding their learning strategies' and 'formulating their own explanations' are among the most appropriate instructional responsibilities for promoting LA (Tok, 2011). A certain degree of LA can promote students' motivation to read for different purposes and to become independent readers who can enjoy reading autonomously outside the classroom, too (Hedge, 2003).

Scholars around the world agree on the importance of LA in academic institutions since it is a deciding factor for academic success, especially among tertiary-level students. For instance, Wintek (2012) point out as teachers and educators have a responsibility to foster LA since it is regarded as one of the most important goals in education.

B. Extensive Reading

Educators around the world, who are targeted to bring changes into SL/FL teaching-learning sector, are continually looking for methods of improving their students' language abilities, and ER has become one due to the benefits it brings to students' study (Son, 2017). Even though the basic concept of ER is to encourage students to read a variety of topics for enjoyment as much as possible, many studies have confirmed that its activities provide various advantages to language skills, and can be used effectively to promote LA (Jaisook & Thirawisit, 2015). Teachers must depend on the provided curriculum and other requirements to often teach students at mixed ability levels in their classrooms (Mermelstein, 2015). However, the difference among learners brought great problems to teaching in the same classroom with the same content. The scholars suggested ER as an alternative method to the conventional teacher-centered method of teaching because it helps learners to get chances to choose the ways they can become successful language learners with their difference in the same language learning classroom.

The idea of ER goes in line with the notion of social constructivism because it holds the belief that the learner's active participation plays a pertinent role in the process of learning. The main goal of integrating active activities in ER classes is to improve learners' participation in a reading program and discuss widely what they have understood from their reading (Channuan, 2012). Additionally, Benson (2001, pp. 35-36) stated, "Learning will be most effective when learners are fully involved in decisions about the content and process of learning". Realizing the limitations of the classroom and the time available for teachers to directly interact with each student, ER may be able to help second language learners become more autonomous learners, especially in EFL environments where exposure to the target language may be limited. Therefore, it seems logical for EFL teachers to seriously consider using the ER method to assist learners in their classrooms (Mermelstein, 2015).

Davis (1995) points out that during ER learners are encouraged to read as many books as they can, with pleasure, according to their level, without the pressure of testing or marks. Walter (2003) also states that getting the chance to choose the materials depending on their preference initiate students to read eagerly. Thus, to achieve the goal of having the students read the materials with their strategies, they should be given the facility of reaching them and be loaded with enthusiasm and motivation; even more, they should be given enough time to do such an activity.

C. Constructivism Learning Theory of Learner Autonomy

Vygotsky's constructivist theory from 1978 serves as the theoretical foundation for this research investigation. Constructivism is an approach to learning that holds people who actively construct their knowledge and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner (Elliott et al., 2000). In developing constructivists' ideas Arends (1998) points out that meaning is influenced by the interaction between prior knowledge and novel experiences and is created by the learner through experience.

Constructivism learning philosophy promotes the idea that students actively generate their knowledge. It places LA at the center and employs it as a tool for reaching the learning objective. Teachers primarily serve as organizers, guides, and assistants throughout the entire learning process, but students are responsible for their learning. Since students are responsible for their learning and assessment, constructivism encourages a sense of personal agency.

The fundamental tenet of constructivism is that knowledge is created by learners themselves and that new knowledge is built on top of prior knowledge. The new or modified information that a person creates as a result of new learning

experiences is influenced by this prior knowledge (Phillips, 1995). Throughout the learning process, students evaluate, verify, and critique new information in addition to understanding it.

In constructivist theory, teachers' prior task is to stimulate learners' learning interest and learning motivation and then connect current content with learners' original knowledge and experience organically. The new or modified information that a person creates as a result of new learning experiences is influenced by this prior knowledge (Phillips, 1995). Throughout the learning process, students evaluate, verify, and critique new information in addition to understanding it.

According to constructivist theory, teachers' first responsibility is to pique students' interest in and enthusiasm for learning before naturally fusing current material with prior knowledge and experience. Students do not enter the classroom with blank slates. Based on their prior lives and education, they have developed specific knowledge and expertise, and they also have their perspectives on everything. Based on their prior lives and education, they have developed specific knowledge and expertise, and they also have their perspectives on everything. Based on their prior knowledge and cognitive ability, learners can construct their explanations of difficulties. Therefore, rather than imposing new information on students without regard for their prior knowledge and experience, teachers should respect existing experiences and cultivate new information gradually.

Learners also develop their unique physiological worlds based on their unique genetic predispositions, social contexts, family circumstances, and life experiences. Additionally, its uniqueness should be acknowledged. To stimulate student learning initiatives and help them create a multi-faceted knowledge hierarchy, teachers should approach their students with non-substitutable topics with a variety of growing demands and opportunities.

According to Deci (1996), an American social psychologist, we need to feel autonomous or like we are making our own decisions to feel fulfilled. However, to feel fulfilled, we also need to have our other two wants met: we need to feel capable of facing and overcoming "optimal challenges" and we need to feel "connected with people in the middle of those challenges" (p. 88). This theory of human motivation holds that our relatedness both confirms and limits the freedom that autonomy offers. When we behave independently, our acts are genuine because they stem from our sense of identity. The development of a person's autonomy is another goal of pedagogies that aim to make use of this universal potential for autonomous activity.

The way we learn is also influenced by the liberty our biological makeup has granted us. From a cognitive standpoint, learning is also uniquely individual since, in its most basic form, our cognitive processes are all different from one another. Constructivism, which contends that humans create our knowledge by interacting with new information, ideas, and experiences, is based in part on this theory.

In general, constructivism learning theory is the foundation of and fully reflects the cultivation of LA. They complete one another. LA promotes learner-oriented study, putting special emphasis on learners' role in the cognitive subject, with constructivism learning theory as theoretical support. Learning occurs when students develop knowledge in meaningful ways with the aid of essential learning resources, teachers, and other people. Thus, scholars from all over the world concur that LA is crucial for academic institutions since it determines academic success, particularly for students in tertiary education. For instance, Wintek (2012) notes that as LA is one of the most crucial educational objectives, instructors and educators must promote it.

In a similar vein, the Curriculum Framework for Ethiopian Education encourages students at all levels to take an active role in their learning and to look for information from a variety of sources, but in the current researcher's experience as both a student and a teacher, they remain passive and dependent, lacking initiatives to demonstrate their effort to overcome their learning problems on their own The majority of teachers take on the lead position and carry the bulk of the load for their students.

Teachers themselves have begun to believe that it is their job to determine the appropriate resources, teaching strategies, teaching methods, and other components that are employed in the teaching-learning process, even though learners are reluctant to accept responsibility.

To ascertain the impact of ER in EFL classes, related classroom studies have been conducted abroad during the past few decades. For instance, Channuan (2012) studied the impacts of ER and discovered that students who often used cognitive and meta-cognitive methods during ER exhibited improvement in their LA, allowing language learners to eventually become more independent readers.

Do and Dinh (2020) also did a study at the Faculty of Foreign Languages to investigate the potential effects of ER on LA of first-year EFL learners. The results demonstrated that ER could assist the majority of students in improving their autonomy in learning, as evidenced by an improvement in their capacity for making decisions, establishing goals for activities, allocating time for activities, applying to other activities, and performing self-evaluations. These studies further recommended that teachers should correctly integrate ER into instructional activities, increase student awareness, and establish supportive learning environments to help students grow their autonomy.

Therefore, the current study was conducted to investigate if a statistically significant difference can be brought between the experimental group's and control group's levels of autonomy due to ERST treatment, and identify the attitude of the students toward the ERST treatment.

To define the more general components of ER, which were looked into as a whole in prior studies, the current researcher explicitly targeted ERST as a treatment. The researcher claims that by doing this, implementers may focus on

the treatment area rather than having to deal with more general ER issues. Thus, it is clear from this that the present researcher wished to close any gaps that might have developed during implementation by handling the scope.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

Since the study employed the concurrent triangulation design, the quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the questionnaire and interview, respectively. The questionnaire was administered to check the level of the students in both groups in terms of LA before the treatment. It was distributed to the students in the first week of the class; they spent approximately 40 minutes completing it. Then, the students went through the 8-week treatment. Participants had about 3 hours of Communicative English Language Learning class per week. For the treatment group, additionally, ERST was given for 8 periods of 70 minutes each in between the pre and post-intervention questionnaires. Then, the post-intervention questionnaire was administered to both groups in the last week of the class. Students spent approximately 40 minutes completing it. The interview was also conducted with the teacher trainer after the treatment. The interview session took approximately 30 minutes. It was conducted by using the target language (English) since the teacher trainer had no problem using the language. Lastly, the answers were digitally recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically.

B. Context and Participants

The study took place at Wollega University in Ethiopia. Communicative English Language skills-II course was an English course that 1st-year University students were required to take. The class met for 70 minutes on Thursday over the course of 8 weeks in addition to the regular 3 hours class for the regular communicative course. One TEFL teacher was selected purposively to give training to the experimental group students and conventionally taught the control group students. The teacher was selected on the ground that she is well qualified and volunteer to participate in the study. Of 326 social science students who were assigned to ten sections in the semester, the two sections which were taught by the selected teacher were selected purposively in order not to create a difference in the student's performance because of the ability of different teachers while teaching the conventional course. Lastly, the two sections were randomly assigned as the experimental group (which consists of 30 participants) and the control group (which consists of 31 participants).

C. Instrumentation and Validation

The researcher employed a questionnaire and interview to get valid information for the current research questions. The questionnaire was made up of closed questions (fixed responses) which require the respondent to choose between a limited number of answers and used as one of the research techniques for data collection. It was adopted from Channuan (2012). The questionnaire was developed based on the components of the LA model, and it was adopted primarily to meet the objectives of the study, and in line with the review of the literature. It involved 24 questions used to measure the autonomy level of the students. The other 10 questions were used to investigate the attitudes of the subjects toward ERST.

An interview, which was another method of data collection in the present study, used a semi-structured-interview format as a guideline with a set of specific questions where the respondent trainer was free to say whatever she has drawn from the observation. These questions were intended to find out basic information for the research objectives by eliciting their perspectives. An interview was held with the teacher trainer to supplement information and to cross-verify the data collected through the questionnaires.

Concerning the construct reliability of the questionnaire, all the Composite Reliabilities (CRs) were higher than the recommended value of 0.70. Cronbach's alpha of each construct also exceeded the 0.70 threshold. Convergent validity was also acceptable because the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was over 0.50. Discriminant validity was assessed by the Fornell-larger criterion, and the result shows the square root of AVE for the construct was greater than the inter-construct correlation. Discriminant validity was also assessed by the Heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations, with values below the threshold of 0.90. Moreover, internal consistency was assessed by collecting and analyzing questionnaire data via Cronbach's alpha test. The alpha coefficient for the questionnaire items which measure LA Level Scale (24 items) was 0.85, and for questionnaire items that measure students' attitudes toward ERST (10 items) was 0.785. Therefore, the questionnaire items were at a well-constructed scale as a reliability coefficient was higher than 0.70.

The researcher spoke face-to-face with the teacher trainer to ensure the validity of the interview data. The interviewee's responses were then verbatim recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

D. Experimental Conditions: ERST Intervention

After the pre-intervention questionnaire was administrated to groups, the teacher trainer was given two days of training before the treatment with the guidance of ERST material prepared for this purpose. ERST material was developed on the bases of ER theory and the framework of LA training mainly developed by Dickinson (1995) and Wenden (1991) and adapted by Channuan (2012). The current researcher also adapted the material in a way it fits the

current study's research area. The material for this training was prepared with the ambition of encouraging students to use appropriate ERSs while reading a range of materials inside- and outside the classroom. Therefore, the material for the current study was prepared in a way that works on the psychological and methodological makeup of the learners to make them successful autonomous learners.

The teacher trainer received thorough training on how to support students' independent work, how to follow up on one-on-one reading lessons, how to keep students motivated and confident, how to lead peer work, group work, and discussion groups, and how to conduct reading journals for taking notes. On the other hand, in one section of the control group, it was advised to the instructor to utilize the conventional method of teaching and the Course Module as it is without combining it with the training method.

Since ER by its very nature holds autonomy, the students were expressly instructed on LA integrated with ER for the first two periods. To support students in managing their job efficiently, metacognitive practices including planning, monitoring, and assessing were introduced. Affective techniques including motivation and favorable attitudes about ER and LA were simultaneously fostered.

The subjects then received training in reading strategies for the following three periods through various reading exercises, including activating prior knowledge, predicting, guessing word meanings, finding main ideas, using references, resourcing, deduction, imagery, keywords method, transfer, inference, translation, and summarizing. Through these activities, students were able to become more aware of the various reading comprehension (ER) strategies that may be used to improve their reading comprehension and autonomy.

The following three periods were used for classroom SSR exercises. All students brought any reading materials of their interest that they started reading outside and continued reading individually in the classroom during the training. The teacher took the role of a reading model and read just like the students, too. In each period, sustained silent reading lasted for 30 minutes and the remaining 40 minutes were devoted to class discussions on the issues that learners read silently in the classroom and outside the classroom and strategies they have used while reading, teacher consultation, and book borrowing and returning. Apart from in-class reading, students were encouraged to enjoy outside reading as much as possible so that they can practice taking charge of their learning to become lifelong autonomous learners.

Both groups completed the post-intervention questionnaire on the degree of autonomy, and to further validate the findings, an interview with the teacher trainer was undertaken to discuss the overall impact of the intervention on the LA level and attitude.

E. Data Analysis

The current researcher used one-way ANCOVA to examine the quantitative information obtained from the autonomy level scale pre and post-intervention questionnaire and to account for any potential pre-existing differences between these two groups. To ascertain if the intervention made a difference between the two independent groups on a dependent variable, the one-way ANCOVA was employed. Regarding the qualitative data, content analysis was used to transcribe and categorize the teacher-trainer interview replies on the impacts of ERST on the degree of LA, and the attitude of the experimental group towards ERST (Creswell, 2012).

IV. RESULTS

A. The Effects of ERST in Enhancing Level of Learner Autonomy

The main objective of the current research question was to test the differences that could be brought in Wollega University students' level of autonomy because of the ERST treatment. The researcher hypothesizes that the autonomy level of participants who took ERST in addition to the communicative English Language skills-II course would show better improvement than those who only study via the conventional way. To answer this research question and test the hypothesis, the data were gathered through pre- and post-intervention questionnaires for the corresponding groups and analyzed by the statistical package SPSS version 28.

The current researcher used a one-way ANCOVA because of the following reasons: First, the researcher checked that the dependent variable (LA) and covariate variables (pre-intervention questionnaire) were measured on a continuous scale; second, the independent variable consisted of two independent groups (experimental and control groups); and third, there was no relationship between the observations in each group or between the groups themselves. For example, there were different participants in each group with no participant being in more than one group. The current researcher also examined the skewness, kurtosis, and p-value of the questionnaire.

The histograms, normal Q-Q plots, and box plots all revealed that the questionnaire results were very evenly distributed. There were no outliers which may distract the result of the study. Table 1 below also shows acceptable values of skewness and kurtosis since they range between -2 and +2 (George & Mallery, 2010).

TABLE 1
NORMALITY TEST FOR LEVEL OF LA SCALE QUESTIONNAIRE

Group	Skewness	Kurtosis	P-Value
CG	0.13 (SE=0.42)	-0.95 (SE=821)	0.45
EG	0.03 (SE= 0.43)	-0.77 (SE= 0.83)	0.83

Additionally, a test of the assumptions underlying the homogeneity of regression was required. The result in Table 2 indicates that the interaction was not significant since $p = .27$. That is, $p (.27) > (.05)$.

TABLE 2
HOMOGENEITY OF REGRESSION TEST FOR LEVEL OF LA

Source	Type III Sum of Sq.	Df	Mean Sq.	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Sq.
Group * questionnaire	.27	1	.27	1.23	.27	.02
Error	12.24	57	.22			
Total	856.25	61				
Corrected Total	13.99	60				

Leven's test of equality of error variance was also tested. It is evident from the result in Table 3 that the one-way ANCOVA's underlying premise of homogeneity of variance has been satisfied because $F (1, 59) = .003$, $p = .96$. That is, $p (.96) > (.05)$.

TABLE 3
LEVENE'S TEST FOR LEVEL OF LA

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.003	1	59	.96

Table 4 shows the number of students who participated in the control group (31 students) and experimental group (30 students). In this output, it can be observed differences in means and standard deviations between the control group ($M=3.58$, $SD=.48$) and the experimental group ($M=3.86$, $SD=.45$). The result reveals the improvement of the control group's mean to the experimental group's mean. This shows that the treatment brought improvements in the LA level of the experimental group when we compare them with the control group.

TABLE 4
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR LEVEL OF LA

Group	Mean	SD	Total N	Total %
CG	3.58	.48	31	100%
EG	3.86	.45	30	100%
Total	3.72	.48	61	100%

The results in Table 5 indicate that there is a significant difference [$F (1, 58) = 6.36$, $p = .01$] between the groups, whilst adjusting for the pre-questionnaire. The covariate, the pre-intervention questionnaire, was not significantly related to the LA level of Wollega University students, $F (1, 58) = 1.21$, $p=.28$. This implies that ERST affects the level of LA after controlling for the effect of the covariate.

The effect size of ERST on the post-intervention questionnaire's mean scores based on ETA squared is approximately 10%. This indicates that the ERST program had a medium effect on the improvement of autonomy levels (Cohen, 1988).

Since the goal of this study was to reject the null hypothesis (ERST doesn't have any effect on the level of LA) and accept the actual hypothesis (ERST affects the level of LA), the researcher was looking for a < 0.05 p-value. In the current research case since the p-value was .01, the research hypothesis was accepted.

TABLE 5
RESULTS OF TESTS OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS FOR LEVEL OF LA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pre-questionnaire	.26	1	.26	1.21	.28	.02
Group	1.37	1	1.37	6.36	.01	.10
Error	12.51	58	.22			
Total	856.25	61				
Corrected Total	13.99	60				

The estimated marginal means in Table 6 show the adjusted means (controlling for the covariate 'pre-questionnaire') for control group ($M = 3.57$) and Experimental group ($M = 3.87$). From these adjusted means, it is clear that the experimental group showed improvement in their level of LA due to the intervention after adjusting for the pre-intervention questionnaire. The table also shows the mean difference between control and treatment groups which is .30 with a standard error of .12 while covariate (pre-Questionnaire) appearing in the model is controlled. In addition to the questionnaire results, the teacher trainer has given comments on the student's readiness to learn on their own and their participation during the treatment when the interview was conducted with her.

TABLE 6
POST HOC TEST: ESTIMATES AND PAIR-WISE COMPARISON FOR LEVEL OF LA

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean	Std. Error	MD (I-J)	Std. Er.	sig.
CG	EG	3.57	.08	-.30	.12	.01
EG	CG	3.87	.09	.30	.12	.01

Regarding the enhancement of the participant students' level of autonomy, the teacher trainer commented:

When I started giving the training, in addition to their normal lesson, they were reluctant to manage their work by planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Since they didn't have experience in planning their activities before, didn't know how to monitor their work and lack of confidence in evaluating their work, it was challenging at the beginning. They also showed the feeling which expresses that the teacher was the one who has to provide everything for them. After two weeks of practice and guidance, they started managing their work. They recorded every activity in their reading journal and brought it to the classroom to discuss and show me their improvement. It was in fact because of the treatment that the students became more confident than before. It is amazing to see such a courageous change in my students' autonomy due to the treatment. (Date: January 30, 2022)

B. Students' Attitudes Towards the Treatment (ERST)

Mean scores of students' attitudes towards the ERST questionnaire and teacher trainers' responses to the interview questions were examined to answer the second research question. Table 7 shows that the experimental group has highly positive attitudes toward ERST after the treatment since their mean score is between 3.51 and 4.50.

TABLE 7
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ERST

	N	Mean	SD	Meaning
I think ERST has increased my confidence	30	4.17	.99	High
The classroom atmosphere supports my effective learning	30	4.27	.69	High
The classroom activities support my effective learning	30	4.10	.71	High
I benefit from the strategies I have learned from ERST	30	4.00	.91	High
ERST encourages me to learn more.	30	3.83	1.09	High
I benefit from the guidelines that my teacher gives me during ERST.	30	3.93	.74	High
I use the strategies I have learned from ERST to overcome difficulties that I find while learning	30	3.63	.96	High
After ERST, I know how to manage my language learning.	30	3.77	.94	High
After ERST, I think I become an autonomous learner.	30	3.93	1.01	High
I think ERST initiates me to evaluate my work confidently	30	3.97	1.07	High
Valid N (list wise)	30			High

*Note.*1.00-1.50 = very low; 1.51-2.50 = low; 2.51-3.50 = moderate; 3.51-4.50 = high; 4.51-5.00 = very high. (Channuan, 2012)

The teacher-trainer's response for the interview regarding research question two also agreed with these results as she said,

At the beginning of the training, the students didn't have the experience to work independently, for instance, plan what they are going to do, evaluate their work, learn on their own through ER and use reading journals to register their daily activities. It was tiresome to create a love of ER since it was the base for the training. Through time, after many efforts, they started internalizing the way they can use their autonomy to learn independently by using reading strategies. Finally, I was very surprised about the changes they have brought in their attitude towards their responsibility for their learning.

They even raised the idea of learning about their autonomy as a subject in lower grades since it can help the students as a base. Especially they appreciated the time they have passed in the reading lab (Digital Library) where they read different reading materials of their interest and got unforgettable knowledge. They also didn't forget to mention that these activities also have played a great role in the improvement of their writing skills by providing them the knowledge of the organization, word power, spelling, and punctuation knowledge. Generally, the students had a positive attitude towards ERST and they liked the training and benefited most from it. (Date: January 30, 2022)

V. DISCUSSION

A. The Effects of ERST in Enhancing Level of Learner Autonomy

The findings of this study indicated that the experimental group improved more than the control group in every area of the LA level assessed in the current investigation. The results show that ERST had a significant positive impact on the experimental group's autonomy level. As a result of ERST, kids began making plans for what they would accomplish, keeping track of and evaluating their development, and recording every action in their reading journals. The results of this study are consistent with Little's (1991) concept of autonomy, which is the ability of language learners to take independent action right away. In this regard, Channuan (2012) discovered that students' LA improved when they often engaged in cognitive and meta-cognitive methods during ER. Additionally, Mede et al. (2013) found that the students began employing their ability for decision-making and self-monitoring, which are particular traits of autonomous learners exhibiting a high level of metacognitive strategy utilization.

Similarly to this, Son (2017) believed that when students are allowed to read whatever interests them, they will feel at ease and inspired to study and use the language, which will improve their learning autonomy. According to the current findings, ERST can significantly increase students' level of autonomy by cultivating both their attitude toward their teachers' supportive roles and their attitude toward themselves as independent students who seek out the knowledge

they need to succeed as learners from them. As a result, the teachers' responsibility to increase students' awareness, foster a supportive learning environment, and appropriately incorporate autonomous ER techniques into the instructional activities creates an environment that is conducive to enhancing their autonomy. The study's findings also demonstrate that ERST is essential for students to learn how to use autonomous reading strategies in EFL classrooms, including cognitive, metacognitive, and affective ones. This condition also enables students to recognize and choose what they learn, how they learn, and where to achieve it.

Additionally, the results showed that teaching LA in an ER setting is a successful pedagogical strategy for assisting EFL university students in raising their level of autonomy. This may indicate that the participants found the course to be worthwhile. They demonstrated improvements in their ability to cultivate optimistic attitudes about their responsibilities in learning.

Moreover, the majority of the students felt more comfortable reading on their own. The results show that the independence they experienced in the ER situation encouraged them to read more independently without the direct help of their teachers. Additionally, it is claimed that including ERST in university-level EFL classes helps students develop independent language learning environments because they are old enough to manage their education. This approach teaches students that they are equally responsible for the success or failure of their learning process and empowers them to take control of their education. In conclusion, ERST has shown encouraging results that point the way toward developing independent learners in EFL classrooms.

B. The Students' Attitudes Towards the ERST Treatment

The results of the questionnaire showed that the students have overwhelmingly positive sentiments toward ERST and that they thought the training generally increased their level of autonomy. The study's conclusions revealed that the treatment group students developed into independent learners and that occasionally throughout the training, their attitude about ERST improved. In this regard, Swatevacharkul and Boonma (2020) discovered that after participants realized that LA is the foundation for successful, self-directed, interactive, and independent learning, they appeared to have favorable sentiments regarding the notion. In addition, Kalengkongan (2012) discovered that the affective, cognitive, and behavioral attitude components all received positive responses from the participants. Based on these results, she was able to conclude that the participants had an optimistic attitude toward emergency room care. Furthermore, according to Do and Dinh (2020), ER helped pupils develop favorable attitudes around reading activities.

In a similar vein, Fekadu (2021) suggested that a study be done to provide strategic training that focuses on giving students a list of available strategies that help them approach various academic tasks, take better responsibility for their learning, and become autonomous learners. Considering that ER techniques might aid in the students' overall growth, it is crucial to incorporate them into the LA development of the pupils. These solutions must be developed through collaborative efforts between teachers and students. As was discovered in the current study, students can be better helped to build their autonomy, which in a way leads them to outperform in their learning, by integrating ERST into the entire process of EFL classrooms. Therefore, the current researcher thinks that students will always have optimistic views toward their accomplishments if teachers are constantly willing to help their students stand by themselves and do this responsibly and convincingly.

VI. CONCLUSION

Due to their shared essential qualities, LA can be improved using an ER approach; as a result, the current study was done to ascertain how ERST affects LA enhancement in the context of EFL. The results are consistent with the hypothesis that ERST improves students' language acquisition by having a favorable impact on the level of LA. The results of this study indicated that ERST needed to be improved in ESL/EFL classroom settings to encourage students to take ownership of their learning. To effectively manage their learning through concrete planning, monitoring, and evaluation of their progress, students must be conversant with the concept of LA and put it into practice. Future studies may need to broaden their focus by taking into account ER as the superior method for developing language learning skills like speaking and listening.

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