

# Tertiary EFL Students' Learner Autonomy: The Roles of Teachers in the Classroom

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**Abstract**—Learner autonomy has been considered the central aim of education because of its significant role in enabling students to develop into successful lifelong learners. In modern times, students have many opportunities to learn outside the classroom, the ideal context for learner autonomy development. Therefore, research about the development of learner autonomy in the out-of-class learning context needs to receive more focus, especially in Vietnam. Based on sociocultural theory as the theoretical framework, the current research aims to explore the potential of promoting EFL tertiary students' learner autonomy in the out-of-class learning context through teachers' roles in the classroom. Data collected from answers to a questionnaire on learner autonomy and teachers' roles (N=709) suggested significant correlations between factors of the situational, behavioral, and psychological dimensions of learner autonomy and the roles of teachers as a resource, an evaluator, a controller, an instructor, a facilitator, and a co-learner in the classroom. The follow-up semi-structured in-depth group interviews (N=35) revealed that the factors that mediated the relationship between learner autonomy and teachers' roles were the students' motivation, teacher autonomy, trust, and care. These results help to bridge in-class and out-of-class learning and provide pedagogical implications to foster learner autonomy development in the out-of-class learning context.

**Index Terms**—learner autonomy, teachers' roles, out-of-class learning, in-class learning

## I. INTRODUCTION

Learner autonomy has been in the mainstream of educational research for many decades. It, however, remains a complicated and dynamic concept (Ushioda, 2011) and requires more empirical data to strengthen the understanding of itself and its relationships with other factors. Research into students' learner autonomy is of even greater importance in Vietnam, a developing country influenced by Confucianism but undergoing an ongoing transformation from teacher-centeredness towards learner-centeredness. Even though learners have more opportunities to learn independently and promoting learner autonomy has been included in the national education objectives for learners of all ages (Vietnamese Government, 2017), EFL tertiary learners have low and reactive learner autonomy (Le, 2019), which might have contributed to their low language competence (Tran & Marginson, 2018). However, due to the limitations of the public training sector, such as the heavy workload of the training curriculum, the big class size, the minimum resources, and more (Nguyen, 2017), the possibility for teachers to organize activities to promote learner autonomy development in the classroom is low. As a result, promoting learner autonomy development in the out-of-class learning context can be one of the solutions to foster learner autonomy, helping them have better learning outcomes.

Regarding learner autonomy as a social construct (Ushioda, 2011), its development occurs through the interactions and interdependence between learners and other agents in their social community. Teachers are the prominent factor in that community because Vietnamese students are familiar with the dictation of teachers in all aspects of learning (Bui, 2018). Previous research has pointed out that learner autonomy can be fostered by teachers' actions in the classroom, even though the connection is delicate (Wang & Ryan, 2020). Therefore, the establishment of the connection between the roles of teachers in the classroom and the students' learner autonomy in the out-of-class learning context can give more light on the potential to foster learner autonomy development right from the daily activities of teachers in the classroom, bridging in-class and out-of-class learning.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Learner Autonomy

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A plethora of studies has defined learner autonomy. Concerning both ability and willingness, Benson (2001) defines learner autonomy as “the capacity to take control of one’s learning” (p. 47), being one of the most popular definitions of learner autonomy research up to the present. The capacity to take control manifests over three dimensions: learning situation, learning behavior, and psychology of learning (Benson, 2011), or the situational, behavioral, and psychological dimensions, respectively (Ding & Shen, 2022). The situational dimension indicates the empowerment or emancipation of learners by giving them control over the learning content, manifesting through the learners’ awareness of teachers and other agents’ authority (group influence) and their freedom to make decisions on the learning content outside the classroom (freedom) (Murase, 2015). The capacity to control the behavioral dimension is shown through the learners’ performance of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, including planning, self-management, self-monitoring, problem identification, and self-evaluation (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990), expressing through their behaviors in five stages of the learning process: getting prepared, carrying out (Murase, 2015), monitoring, self-evaluating and transcending (Reulens, 2019). The psychological dimension focuses on attitudes and cognitive abilities which enable the learner to take more responsibility for his/her learning, indicating through learners’ awareness of their responsibilities in learning and their insistence when dealing with learning difficulties (mental readiness) (Bei et al., 2019) and the ability to manage their feelings when learning (affective factors) (Hab k & Magyar, 2018).

### *B. Teachers’ Roles*

Students’ perceptions of teachers’ roles are how the students understand or interpret different behavior patterns that their teachers may have in the classroom (D rnyei & Murphey, 2003). From a traditional perspective, the teacher in the classroom is considered the most influential person who oversees all aspects of learning, playing the role of a controller. Besides being a controller, teachers also have the roles of an organizer, a participant, a resource, a prompter, a tutor, and an assessor (Arafat, 2005). Different teaching approaches require teachers to play different roles, such as the Grammar Translation Method emphasizes teachers as the authority, the Direct Method describes teachers as the director, the Audio-Lingual Method requires teachers to act as orchestra leaders, the Community Language Learning and Suggestopedia suggests the role of a counselor, and the Communicative Language Teaching stresses the roles of teachers as a facilitator, a manager, an advisor, and a communicator (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). More recent research suggested that educators have eight roles: information provider and coach, facilitator and mentor, assessor and diagnostician, curriculum developer and implementer, role model as a teacher and practitioner, manager and leader, scholar and researcher, and professional (Koca et al., 2021). In the Vietnamese context, while teachers hold traditional roles in the classroom under the influence of Confucianism, they are gradually applying the Communicative Language Teaching approach, moving towards learner-centeredness. Hence, teachers in this research are argued to play seven roles: controller, instructor, facilitator, resource, evaluator, co-learner, and explorer in the classroom.

### *C. Learner Autonomy and Teachers’ Roles*

The roles of teachers in learner autonomy development have been widely discussed when they are in learner autonomy training or promoting activities. However, organizing these activities in the classroom is only sometimes possible. Initiating from the idea that it is likely to lead to autonomous behaviors in many learners if they are supported to develop their learner autonomy from inside the classroom (Reinders, 2018), and opportunities to promote learner autonomy development are available within routine tasks of conventional classrooms (Wang & Ryan, 2020), the current research focuses on the correlations between students’ learner autonomy in the out-of-class context and the roles of teachers in the classroom, as well as the factors that mediated these correlations.

## III. METHOD

### *A. Research Questions*

The research followed the explanatory sequential design with two research questions:

- (a) To what extent does the students’ learner autonomy in the out-of-class learning context correlate with their perceived teachers’ roles in the classroom?
- (b) What are the factors that mediated the connection between students’ learner autonomy in out-of-class learning and teachers’ roles in the classroom?

### *B. Participants*

Two lecturers with doctoral degrees, more than ten years of teaching experience, publications on learner autonomy and two senior students with good academic results participated in the instrument proofreading phase. Forty-eight students from the first researcher’s class participated in the pilot phase; three of them underwent the trial interview. 743 English majors in different school years of three randomly selected universities in Ho Chi Minh City participated in the data collection phase. 709 answers were valid after data screening, and 35 students from this group volunteered to participate in the qualitative phase of the research.

### *C. Instruments*

#### *(a). Questionnaire*

The questionnaire includes the Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) and the Teachers' Roles Scale (TRS). LAS includes 45 items to depict students' capacity to control three dimensions of learner autonomy: situational dimension (group influence and freedom) adapted from Murase (2015), behavioral dimension (getting prepared, carrying out, monitoring, self-evaluating, and transcending) adapted from Murase (2015) and Reulens (2019), and psychological dimension (mental readiness and affective factors) adapted from Bei et al. (2012) and Habák and Magyar (2018). Each factor of three dimensions consists of five items. TRS has forty-two items to describe students' perceptions about the seven roles of teachers in the classroom (controller, instructor, facilitator, resource, evaluator, co-learner, and explorer). TRS was adapted from Arafat (2005) and Koca et al. (2021); each role consists of six items. All items are on a Likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree.

(b). *Interview Question*

There is only one main question “Which action(s) of teachers in the classroom can help you with your out-of-class learning?” to understand how teachers' actions in the classroom could support the students' learning outside the classroom. More questions can be added if the interviewer wants to make further clarification.

D. *Procedure*

The researchers discussed with two colleagues and two students in the proofreading phase to seek comments on the instruments in both English and Vietnamese versions. After that, the first researcher conducted the pilot phase. The participants did the questionnaire on Google Forms and noted difficulties when answering it. The quantitative data was then entered into SPSS 26.0 and analyzed for internal consistency. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient values were all greater than 0.70, the acceptable values for social science (George & Mallery, 2010). They had no difficulties understanding and doing the survey, so the questionnaire was ready for quantitative data collection. Based on the quantitative data of the pilot phase, the first researcher conducted a pilot interview with three students of that class, noting how the interview went. After carefully going through the data collected in the pilot phase, some adjustments were made, mainly with the wording of the questionnaire. After receiving permission from the deans in three institutions, data collection was conducted in August 2022. To make sure students spent time answering the questionnaire carefully, the first researcher directly went to the institutions to collect data. She randomly chose eight classes in each institution, two each year. The researcher first explained the purpose of the study to the participants and ensured that they understood that their participation was entirely voluntary, and that the data would be used for research purposes only. The researchers gave the participants a collection of IELTS preparation e-books as a gift. The data collected was then processed for analysis.

Once the researchers had finished analyzing the quantitative data, they started collecting qualitative data. Thirty-five students were selected randomly from 320 students from three institutions who volunteered to participate in the second phase, forming five groups of six participants and one group of five participants. The first researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured group interviews in Vietnamese in the coffee shops near the participants' institutions. All interviews were recorded, and each lasted for ninety minutes. The first researcher transcribed the recordings right after the interviews and then translated the transcriptions into English. The transcriptions were returned to the interviewees to ensure they agreed with the content. The researchers adopted thematic analysis approaches to analyze the data. Saturation was reached after the sixth interview, ending the qualitative data collection.

#### IV. RESULTS

A. *Quantitative Data Analysis*

From the descriptive statistics, all items' means (M) ranged from 2.51 to 4.25, and the standard deviation (SD) ranged from .81 to 1.21. All of them skewed within the range between -2 and +2, being acceptable to prove normal distribution (George & Mallery, 2010). Cronbach's alphas for all the factors of LAS were from .709 to .864, indicating a high level of internal consistency for each construct (George & Mallery, 2010). Item-Total statistics showed that the items significantly contributed to the internal consistency of each construct; therefore, no items were removed from LAS. Table 1 presents Cronbach's alpha values of LAS factors.

TABLE 1  
RELIABILITY OF LAS

| Situational dimension                 | Behavioral dimension                   | Situational dimension                   |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Group influence (n=5; $\alpha$ =.719) | Getting prepared (n=5; $\alpha$ =.822) | Mental readiness (n=5; $\alpha$ =.709)  |
| Freedom (n=5; $\alpha$ =.780)         | Carrying out (n=5; $\alpha$ =.795)     | Affective factors (n=5; $\alpha$ =.739) |
|                                       | Monitoring (n=5; $\alpha$ =.817)       |   |
|                                       | Self-evaluating (n=5; $\alpha$ =.824)  |   |
|                                       | Transcending (n=5; $\alpha$ =.864)     |   |

The structure of TRS needed to be more established, so the researchers conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for this scale. The first run met all the requirements, and the results suggested seven factors. However, factor 7 included only two items that suggested the roles of an explorer. Moreover, other items of this role loaded on other factors, so six

items of the explorer role and the other four items of other roles with weak loadings were taken out before the second run of EFA. The second run with 32 items met all the requirements for factor analysis: Bartlett's sphere test was significant ( $\chi^2 = 225781.100$ ,  $df = 528$ ,  $p = .000$ ) with a KMO coefficient of 0.976 ( $> 0.80$ ). A principal component factor analysis with maximum variance rotation was used; the total variance explained by the six factors was 76.196%, and the eigenvalues of each factor were 59.679%, 5.366%, 3.732%, 2.811%, 2.574%, and 2.035%, respectively. The six factors of the TRS are (1) Resource to describe a teacher who has the knowledge and practical experience about the subject teaching and is ready to offer help when needed, for example, "My teacher introduces good resources"; (2) Evaluator to depict the one who finds out how well the students perform; for example, "My teacher gives fair assessment"; (3) Controller is about who has the control in all aspects of the classroom; for instance "My teacher decides what activities to do in class"; (4) Instructor details a teacher who imparts knowledge and skills well, for example, "My teacher gives interesting activities"; (5) Facilitator marks out the one who creates the best condition for effective learning happens in the classroom, for example, "My teacher makes sure the task goes well"; and (6) Co-learner represents a teacher who participates equally in the class activities, for example, "My teacher connects the members of the class." The Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .897 to .953, giving the data high reliability (George & Mallery, 2010). Table 2 presents the values of TRS factors.

TABLE 2  
RELIABILITY OF TRS

| Factors     | n | Cronbach's $\alpha$ coefficient values |
|-------------|---|--|
| Resource    | 6 | .953                                   |
| Evaluator   | 6 | .937                                   |
| Controller  | 6 | .897                                   |
| Instructor  | 6 | .921                                   |
| Facilitator | 4 | .903                                   |
| Co-learner  | 4 | .904                                   |

Bivariate Pearson correlation analyses investigated the correlations between factors of learner autonomy and teachers' roles. Positive correlations were found between all pairs of factors; the values were from  $r(707) = .29$  to  $.53$ ,  $p = .000 < .001$ . Regarding the situational dimension, group influence and freedom correlated moderately with different roles of teachers in the classroom; the values were from  $.29$  to  $.43$ . Towards the behavioral dimension of learner autonomy, the participants' control in each stage of the learning process outside the classroom also correlated positively and moderately with different teachers' roles in the classroom; the values were from  $.37$  to  $.53$ . The control in the transcending stage correlated the strongest with the role of a facilitator. With reference to the psychological dimension, mental readiness and the control of affective factors correlated with different roles of teachers; the values were also from  $.37$  to  $.53$ . The correlation between mental readiness and the role of a facilitator was the strongest of all,  $r$  value was  $.53$ . Table 3 presents the results of the Bivariate Pearson correlation test.

TABLE 3  
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN FACTORS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY AND TEACHERS' ROLES

|                   | Controller | Instructor | Facilitator | Co-learner | Resource | Evaluator |
|-------------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| Group influence   | .386**     | .336**     | .372**      | .299**     | .291**   | .331**    |
| Freedom           | .431**     | .337**     | .369**      | .319**     | .301**   | .307**    |
| Getting prepared  | .433**     | .381**     | .477**      | .401**     | .372**   | .418**    |
| Carrying out      | .487**     | .466**     | .528**      | .491**     | .485**   | .476**    |
| Monitoring        | .414**     | .423**     | .487**      | .414**     | .370**   | .408**    |
| Self-evaluating   | .354**     | .373**     | .419**      | .371**     | .303**   | .366**    |
| Transcending      | .487**     | .462**     | .538**      | .486**     | .490**   | .490**    |
| Mental readiness  | .513**     | .474**     | .530**      | .495**     | .493**   | .471**    |
| Affective factors | .409**     | .385**     | .430**      | .402**     | .373**   | .387**    |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Canonical Correlation Analysis (CCA) found the correlation between teachers' roles and learner autonomy as two latent variables in which teachers' roles predict learner autonomy. The results showed that the canonical correlation between teachers' roles as a predictor of learner autonomy was  $.681$ . In the variable predictor set, the facilitator and controller variables were the primary contributors, and the roles of a resource and co-learner had the secondary contributions. In the learner autonomy set, relevant criterion variables were primarily mental readiness, transcending, and carrying out the plan, while getting prepared and monitoring had the secondary contributions. Figure 1 displays the results of the CCA test.

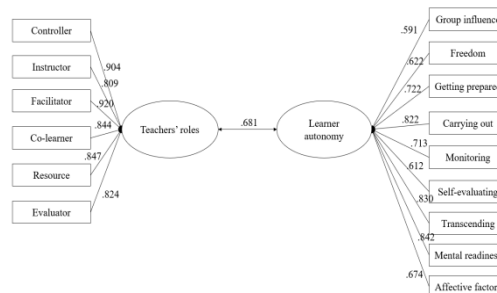


Figure 1. Canonical Correlation Analysis Between Teachers' Roles and Learner Autonomy

## B. Qualitative Data Analysis

With different roles as controller, instructor, evaluator, facilitator, co-learner, and resource, teachers' actions in the classroom have given rise to mediated factors that ignite or strengthen students' learner autonomy in the out-of-class learning context. In other words, these factors have linked what happened in the classroom and students' learner autonomy development outside the classroom. From the data collected, four themes emerged as the mediated factors that have mediated the connection between teachers' actions in the classroom and the participants' learning outside the classroom, dividing into internal and external factors taking the students as the focus. The internal factors were the students' motivations, which were motivated and ignited by teachers' actions in the classroom. The external factors mediating the connection between in-class and out-of-class learning were the care students received from their teachers for their learning, the trust in their teachers, and the teacher autonomy that makes teachers become the role models they want to follow.

### (a). Motivation

Teachers' actions in the classroom motivated students intrinsically, extrinsically, or changing from being extrinsically motivated to intrinsically to learn more effectively outside the classroom. For instance, teachers could touch students' intrinsic motivation through the actions of an instructor and a facilitator to explore what they like, as S1, S4, and S17 said:

*My studies outside the classroom stem from what teachers introduced to us in class. I usually explore more or touch on the part I find interesting. (S1)*

*Teachers make me curious to find out more about what I like. (S4)*

*Teachers allow us to find out things we like in our ways. They give us choices to choose how we want to learn. (S17)*

Many students reported that they started learning to meet the teachers' requirements. Some wanted to pass the course with merit because it could guarantee a better job-seeking opportunity after graduation. With these students, teachers' requirements in class helped them initiate their learning. The following ideas illustrate that students were extrinsically motivated to learn by the requirements of teachers in the classroom:

*If I finish all the exercises on e-learning, I will get a bonus. If I answer the questions in class correctly or my team wins, I get a bonus, so I spend time preparing for the lesson using the course's detailed outline. (S19)*

*I rely on the questions that teachers give, the required exercises, and the test format to study to achieve high scores. (S23)*

*When teachers are demanding, I study more eagerly to get good scores. (S12)*

Some participants only studied because they had to, but learning has gradually become their habit. They started to be interested in learning and started autonomous learning more voluntarily, having a positive feeling when learning. For example, S24, S28, and S16 said:

*At first, I studied because I wanted to prepare for the test. When doing that, I felt there were some points that I found interesting, so I worked more on them. (S24)*

*Even if I am not very interested in a subject, I still want to have a good score on that subject. For example, with my speaking project, I did not like it much. My teachers required each group to do a lot. I spent a lot of time on it and realized I could do more than I thought. (S28)*

*I'm a very obedient student, so I usually prepare the lessons as my teachers suggest. After each lesson, they give us more questions, and when I try to find the answers to those open questions, I like the subject more. (S16)*

### (b). Teacher Autonomy

When one studies, they look up to their teachers and want to be as good as them. The teachers' open mindset, eagerness to learn, and effort to update knowledge and improve themselves made them become role models for students. The participants reported that they tried hard to learn more outside the classroom because they wanted to be successful in their studies and careers in the future, just like their teachers:

*What teachers decide to do in class orients the best for me, not only about learning right now but also about my future. One of my teachers is a very successful teacher. I want to be like her in the future, so I pay attention to what features I like the most about her. Then, I try to master those skills. (S14)*

*I like the way my teachers ask questions. The questions are very thought-provoking. She only organizes a few activities but let us discuss a lot. Her questions show her critical thinking. I try hard to improve mine. (S26)*

(c). *Trust*

As a country in Southeast Asia, Vietnamese students have been influenced heavily by the dictation of teachers in the classroom. When they go to university, students themselves must manage their learning more. However, the transfer of control from teachers to the students takes time, and students need scaffolding and support from the teachers. Teachers' suggestions can help them have more confidence to orient their learning outside the classroom. The participants reported their trust in their teachers' suggestions during the whole learning process: getting ready, carrying out the plan, monitoring, self-evaluating, and transcending to the new learning. That trust helped them to have more confidence when they regulated learning by themselves. The following extracts from students' ideas showed that their trust in teachers has helped them to have control over learning behavior and the learning content:

*Because I am familiar with the guidance of teachers during our 12 years at lower levels, detailed guidance is what I need the most. When I have difficulty, I will ask for their suggestions. I try them out, and the problems can be solved most of the time. (S27)*

*For some subjects, teachers introduce a lot of online resources and extra materials, which they need more time to discuss in class. I usually rely on that list and start searching. Those resources suit me the most. (S3)*

(d). *Care*

Affective factors play an important role in one's learning. When a learner wants to learn, he/ she applies cognitive powers to acquire knowledge. When learning is successful, his or her competence develops. The increased competence enables the learner to learn more easily. The learner at that time sees learning as an enjoyable and satisfying experience, so they want to continue learning. Therefore, students' emotions need to be paid great attention to. Tertiary education requires students to study much more independently, which could bring different emotions. They could find the learning journey on their own lonely, even helpless; therefore, teachers' care has helped them initiate and be consistent with their learning outside the classroom. For example, S30 and S2 said:

*My teachers guide and support me when I have trouble learning outside the classroom. They often check if we need any help from them. I try to study hard because I do not want to disappoint them. (S30)*

*Most of my teachers are friendly; they encourage students to ask questions when they have problems understanding the lessons, even when studying outside the classroom. They form a Zalo (a messaging application) group for the whole class, and students can post their questions there or send them directly to the teachers. Teachers normally reply quickly. (S2)*

## V. DISCUSSION

The research findings highlight teachers' significant role in fostering learner autonomy development. In learner autonomy training activities, teachers play the role of a facilitator, a counselor, and a resource (Voller, 1997; Shi & Han, 2019). Fumin and Li (2012) suggested that the teacher acts as a learning regulator, a resource facilitator, a classroom organizer, and a study guide. Duong (2015) put forward the roles of the teacher as a guide, a mentor, and a resource. Phan (2015) stressed the role of an advisor and guide. The research findings, therefore, align with previous research but have gone more profound in the relationships between aspects in three dimensions of learner autonomy in the out-of-class learning context and the roles that teachers play in the classroom. The roles of a facilitator and a controller correlated the most with factors of learner autonomy, especially with mental readiness, the control in the transcending and carrying out the plan stages of the learning process. Other roles, such as a resource, co-learner, instructor, resource, and evaluator, correlate moderately with all aspects of learner autonomy. The role of a facilitator is well mentioned in the literature on promoting learner autonomy development because, as a facilitator, teachers initiate and support the decision-making process (Voller, 1997) and help students further activate their initiative and motivation (Shi & Han, 2019). The role of a controller depicts Vietnamese students' reactive learner autonomy, which needs the trigger of teachers to initiate their learning.

The empirical data from the research also shows that the factors that mediated the relationship between learner autonomy and teachers' roles are motivation, teacher autonomy, trust, and care. First, motivation is the critical factor influencing the extent to which learners are ready to learn autonomously (Spratt et al., 2002). Teachers' actions in the classroom have motivated students both extrinsically and intrinsically, such as to get good grades or become interested in learning matters, leading them to learn more autonomously. Second, learner autonomy is reported to depend on teacher autonomy (Yu, 2006). Teacher autonomy is teachers' planning, implementing their professional activities within certain restrictions, making preferences regarding the organization of the working environment, and participating in administrative processes (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Third, students believed that a teacher's knowledge and beliefs could foster learner autonomy, and they could study a language autonomously if guided by a knowledgeable teacher (Arikan & Bakla, 2011). They were eager to ask and listen to teachers' suggestions on their studies, such as learning resources and strategies. With the learning spaces that teachers design, students tend to accept them for granted (Dang & Le, 2021). Their learning journey can start and progress from the trust in those suggestions. With professionalism,

competence, valuable knowledge, skills, and the ability to create quality instruction with their means and discovery, teachers inspire students to learn and promote their learner autonomy. These three factors are in line with previous research to be factors that mediate the relationship between teachers' roles and learner autonomy. Fourth, the qualitative data added another mediated factor that students found meaningful: the care they received from their teachers. It helped them kick-start learning and not put down their learning efforts, especially when facing challenges. This factor could be explained by the strong bond between teachers and students under the influence of Confucianism.

All in all, the results from the quantitative and qualitative phases suggested that students' learner autonomy in the out-of-class context correlated with different roles of teachers in the classroom, stressing the roles of a facilitator and a controller. The care they received from their teachers, their trust in them, and teacher autonomy have motivated them to initiate and sustain their learning.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The research has reinforced the vital role of teachers in promoting learner autonomy even when they are not conducting a direct learner autonomy training activity. This result aligns with research stating that conventional classrooms can foster learner autonomy (Chang, 2007; Wang & Ryan, 2020). Teachers must play multiple roles rather than impart knowledge (Fumin & Li, 2012). Even though Vietnamese students are gradually more confident in controlling their learning, they still need the support and guidance of teachers. That is why the role of a facilitator and a controller of the teachers correlated with their learner autonomy the most. They appreciate teachers clarifying the learning outcomes, helping them figure out how to do the tasks, preparing them, and checking if everything is going well as a facilitator. They also hope that teachers make the right decisions on what activities to do, the materials they use, the ways of assessment, and how to impart the curriculum to the class. These actions form the foundation which allows students to regulate their learning outside the classroom more confidently. Although students need the trigger of teachers to regulate their learning as a characteristic of reactive learner autonomy, teachers still need to switch control toward the students. The decision on control shift can be planned or moment-by-moment decision-making (Wang & Ryan, 2020). The control shift can happen by giving more opportunities for learner involvement, authentic language use, and awareness raising, the three main factors of learner autonomy promotion. When students have more choices to make their own decisions, opportunities to discuss task expectations, and more classroom reflection time, their learner autonomy has chances to develop. Despite the heavy workload and other limitations in the teaching and learning process, teachers can still foster it from their actions in the classroom.

Although the research sample is relatively large, it stops at the correlations between students' learner autonomy in the out-of-class learning context and their perceptions of teachers' roles in the classroom. In future research, researchers can establish causal relationships between them. Furthermore, they can also analyze the influence of other factors, such as peers, on learner autonomy development.

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