

A Study on College English Teachers' Role in Developing Learner Autonomy

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Abstract—The present paper attempts to investigate students' beliefs about college English teachers' role in developing learner autonomy by putting forward three research questions. The answers were explored through the designed questionnaire. The results of the study indicate that as for teachers' role in developing learner autonomy, students' perceptions are in conformity with those of experts and teachers'. From students' perspectives, in developing learner autonomy, teachers are considered to have a major role in teaching students' English learning strategies, monitoring and evaluating students' English learning process in various ways, developing students' positive affection and overcoming negative counterpart, and creating the appropriate English learning environment. It has also been found that some of teachers' actual behavior doesn't match students' expectations. Additionally, LB and LC students are found to be more likely to believe that they can autonomously learn English well without teachers' instruction than LA ones. LC students more favor their English teachers to encourage them to take part in class communicative activities to practice English than LB ones.

Index Terms—learner autonomy, teachers' role, students' expectations

I. INTRODUCTION

With great advocacy of quality-oriented education and gradual rise in learner-centered language teaching and lifelong education, more and more attention has been given to the learners' autonomous learning ability and fulfillment of their potential over the learning process. Education should also be aimed at developing learner autonomy for the benefit of learning for life. According to the newly revised *College English Teaching Requirements*, it is clearly stated that "one of college English teaching objectives is to develop students' autonomous learning ability, and that important symbols for successful teaching reform are the formation of students' individualized learning methods and the development of students' autonomous English learning ability" (Ministry of Education P.R.C., 2003, p. 12). Being autonomous in learning is important because the most efficient learners tend to be the ones who have developed a degree of autonomy (Little, 1990). Therefore, the present teaching tendency is expected to be focused on how to motivate students towards autonomous learning. As Henry Holec first brought up the concept in 1981, learning autonomy refers to "the ability of the learner to take charge of his own learning" (Holec, 1981, p. 3). This ability is not innate but to be developed and the degrees and levels of the learners' learning autonomy may vary from person to person (Dickinson, 1992). It is recognized that developing learner autonomy is a complicated project, which necessitates good coordination of various factors in the course of teaching and learning, such as changing ideas about teachers' role and learners' role, redefining teachers' role in autonomous learning context, taking into account learners' individual differences in character, interests, needs, motivation, intelligence and use of learning strategies etc. Among those, teachers as promoters of learner autonomy contribute a lot to developing learner autonomy in an attempt to eventually help learners improve their communicative competence and learn English efficiently.

A lot of papers at home and abroad have attached much importance to this point (Ho, 1995; Reid, 1996; Yang, 1998; Hua, 2001; Wang, 2002; Xu & Xu, 2004 etc.), and English teachers are seen to have an important role in facilitating learner autonomy in English teaching. However, there is a pity that little is concerned with students' beliefs about teachers' role in promoting learner autonomy; to be exact, there is no empirical study about teachers' role in developing learner autonomy from the student's own angle. Besides, a lot of previous studies have demonstrated that there is always mismatch between learners' opinions or perceptions and experts' or teachers' in terms of the same set of learning context (McDonough, 2002; Nunan, 1988; Spratt, 1999). Meanwhile, the prevailing shift to learner-centeredness from teacher-centeredness in the classroom makes learners naturally become the main focus in the course of teaching. As it is the learners who ultimately benefit from development of their autonomous learning ability, the study reported here gives added weight to investigating teachers' role in developing learner autonomy from a learner perspective.

Thus, this study aims to report teachers' role in developing learner autonomy from a learner perspective, which intends to gain a general picture of students' perceptions and expectations about the role acted by college English teachers in developing learner autonomy, to find out the weaknesses and problems in fostering learner autonomy on the part of the teacher, to make teachers aware of the necessity and importance to adapt themselves to new roles for the sake of promoting learner autonomy, and to enable the teachers to reflect on their actual behavior in teaching practice to

enhance learner autonomy. Therefore the study is committed to exploring the three following specific research questions: What are students' beliefs about teachers' role in developing learner autonomy? Does teachers' actual behavior match students' expectations? Are there any differences between students of different levels in their beliefs about teachers' role in developing learner autonomy?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Learner Autonomy*

Autonomy is a difficult concept to define, for it has been approached from different angles by different scholars since the notion came into being. The concept of autonomous learning can be traced back to debates about the development of life-long learning skills and the development of independent thinkers, both of which originated in the 1960s (Gardner & Miller, 1999, p. 6). By 1981 Holec (1981, p. 3) first introduced the definition of autonomy into the educational field and described it as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" and "to take charge of one's own learning is to have and hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of learning". He developed this definition further in 1985 by talking about autonomy as a conceptual tool. Holec's views about autonomy have exerted great influence on autonomy research and his initial definition has been considered as a starting point in much subsequent work in relevant fields (Gardner & Miller, 1999). Dickinson (1987) then sticks to the definition of autonomy as a "situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his (or her) learning and the implementation of those decisions".

Apart from views stated above, other definitions of autonomy can be classified into three major schools of thought: a personal characteristic, a political concept and a definition of educational practices. In David Little's terms, learner autonomy is "essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning" (Little, 1990, p. 7). He considers it as "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (Little, 1991, p. 4) and further develops "the acceptance of responsibility by learners, which has both socio-affective and cognitive implications" (Little, 1995, p. 175) as the basis of learner autonomy. As for Kenny (1993, p. 436), he states that autonomy is not only the freedom to learn but also "the opportunity to become a person". An example of considering autonomy within a political framework is found in the work of Benson (1997, p. 29) who defines autonomy as "representing a recognition of the rights of learners within educational systems" and, within the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language, as "a recognition of the rights of the 'non-native speaker' in relation to the 'native-speaker' within the global order of English". An example of seeing autonomy as an educational practice comes from Boud (1988, p. 17) who believes that autonomy is "an approach to educational practice" as well as being an educational goal. According to Allright (1990, p. 212), learner autonomy is characterized by "a constantly changing but at any time optimal state of equilibrium between maximal self-development and human independence". Littlewood (1996) proposes that learners' ability and willingness to assume responsibility for their learning is at the core of the notion of autonomy and that willingness depends on the motivation and the confidence to take more responsibility for the choices required.

As has been discussed so far, the term autonomy has sparked considerable controversy so that researchers have failed to reach a consensus as to what autonomy really is. However, it is not hard to see all researchers admit the shift of learning responsibility from teachers to students. At the same time, all definitions indicate that students are expected to bear the responsibility for their studies. Considering the real situation of college English language teaching in China, we tend to believe that an autonomous learner especially an autonomous college student is expected to set his own learning goals and learning plans, make effective use of learning strategies, monitor the use of learning strategies, monitor and assess English learning process, based on learners' understanding the teaching objectives and requirements (Xu et al., 2004).

B. *Teachers' Role in Autonomous Learning Context*

The teaching trend over the last two decades has been moving into the more communicatively learner-centered teaching mode, which places much emphasis on developing learner autonomy as one of educational goals. However, autonomous learning is all along challenged by traditional teaching views. There comes as no surprise that some teachers have considerable difficulty in getting used to the change of their role in autonomous learning context, for they have been immersed in traditional teaching for years. Moreover, there is still some doubt whether autonomous learning means that students can learn alone or learn independent of teachers' help and guidance, and whether teachers' responsibilities will be weakened.

Actually, autonomous learning is not necessarily learning alone, nor is it necessarily learning without a teacher, which is stated by Boud (1988, p. 25) who holds "It is compatible with autonomous learning for learners to opt to be 'taught' in situations in which they have decided that it is desirable for their own ends. Developing autonomy does not simply involve removing structured teaching; it may require a greater degree of structure than didactic teaching, but of a different kind." As Benson & Voller (1997, p. 63) clearly put, autonomous learning is absolutely not the learning without teachers' participation; on the contrary, teachers play a crucial role in facilitating learners' self-realization and offering regular guidance. Indeed, learners need get help to develop their autonomous learning skills, so the need for teachers will not decrease, but their role, and the role of teaching in the learning process will change (Little, 1995). As a

matter of matter, autonomous learning empowers teachers and students with a redefinition of their respective roles in English teaching and learning, where teachers are given more requirements and expectations. Therefore, autonomous learning doesn't exclude teachers' role in class, but teachers are supposed to better organize the class teaching. Moreover, degrees of autonomy differ in students, and not every student can achieve the ideal full autonomy at the beginning, so teachers' support and guidance are essentially required in fostering learner autonomy.

Just as learner autonomy is gaining more and more concern in educational field, so the teachers, as the main component to develop learner autonomy in English learning process, need adjust their roles to better facilitate students' autonomous learning. There is no doubt that teachers should assume various roles in autonomous learning environment. Some research papers have discussed teachers' roles in relation to promotion of learner autonomy (Ho, 1995; Reid, 1996; Yang, 1998; Hua, 2001; Wang, 2002; Xu & Xu, 2004). Teachers should assume more roles and responsibilities in autonomous learning context rather than the unidirectional role as knowledge purveyor in the traditional teaching context. Generally speaking, in autonomous learning teachers are expected to play the role as guide, facilitator, assessor, psychological coordinator, peer cooperater, source of information, learner and researcher. More specific roles can be summarized as follows: helping students develop the awareness of autonomous learning and confidence in English language learning; getting to know students' situation in learning English; guiding students to make practical learning plans and objectives; introducing learning strategies combined with class instruction in a systematic way; offering students as many chances as possible to think about the newly learned learning strategies and put them into practice; encouraging more communication between teachers and students via various channels to monitor students' learning process; helping students evaluate their English learning by giving immediate and appropriate feedback; provide more opportunities for students to develop their autonomous learning ability; attaching importance to students' positive affective factors in English learning; creating the harmonious class environment that facilitates learner autonomy. The descriptions about teachers' role obtained from

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Subjects

The subjects of this study are 300 non-English major undergraduate sophomore students from Wuhan Textile University. Based on the results of English proficiency test in their first year students are classified into three different levels to finish their college English learning. Students with higher scores in the test who have higher English proficiency, are called Level A (LA) students; accordingly, the ones with lower scores have lower English proficiency, belonging to Level C (LC) students; then the other students in between are Level B (LB) students with comparatively intermediary English proficiency. In order to make the research result more conveniently analyzed, 300 non-English major undergraduate sophomores were chosen randomly and equally from the three different levels, with 100 students from each level. The actual total subjects are composed of 228 (78.9%) male students and 61 (21.1%) female students in the study.

B. Questionnaire Design

Based on the relevant literature works, after having undergone strict discussion and criticism of the professors and teachers in our department, the original questionnaire was finished. Then a pilot study was carried out in order to make sure that the questionnaire is feasible and valid. With more discussion with teachers and classmates, the last version of the questionnaire which can be applied in this study has been settled. Basic information about subjects is still located in Section One, but there are some modifications about Section Two with revised 26 items and Section Three with revised 23 items. In order to ensure the effectiveness of this study, reliability and validity of the research instrument were examined. With the application of software SPSS18.0, it turns out that the questionnaire has both higher reliability and validity, which guaranteed to secure the results of the study.

C. Data Collection

300 questionnaire sheets were handed out in the students' regular English class time. Also all the items in the questionnaire are written in Chinese in order to make students have a better understanding of the items and fill out their answers more conveniently, accurately and quickly. Fortunately, due to the cooperation of many English teachers available in class, students could finish the sheets carefully in accordance with their real situation. Meanwhile, collecting sheets went smoothly.

D. Data Analysis

In order to figure out the three research questions, a questionnaire with due reliability and validity was designed on the basis of the previous literature works and the pilot study as well as serious discussion with teachers and classmates. Then the questionnaire survey was administered among 300 subjects. It further goes to the data analysis stage, which is not quite easy. The five-point Likert scale was employed to correspond with the choices of every statement item. Choices A, B, C, D, E were given certain value with 1 point, 2 points, 3 points, 4 points and 5 points respectively. After all the answers given by respondents were recorded and typed into the computer with the software SPSS, it could be ready for data analysis. As for the open-ended questions in Section Four, qualitative analysis was applied to treat this

part. All the answers were transcribed and analyzed in order to supplement the information that Section Two and Section Three failed to provide.

IV. RESULTS

A. Analysis of Students' Beliefs Section

Based on data analysis, it can be found that students are clear that teachers' role is important and essential in developing learner autonomy even though they are also aware that successful English learning mainly rely on their own efforts. Generally speaking, students have positive beliefs about teachers' role in developing learner autonomy, which can be illustrated in the following aspects. Firstly, teachers are supposed to play more roles such as students' guides and cooperators in the learner-centered learning environment in order to foster learner autonomy. Secondly, students also believe that teachers are also advocators of the concept of autonomous learning and developers for students' awareness of learner autonomy. Thirdly, teachers are expected to act as instructors in English learning strategies by getting students familiar with relevant learning strategies and involved in any possible chances for practicing these strategies. Fourthly, students hold that teachers should act as monitors and assessors in their English learning process by employing various channels, such as getting students to have frequent reflection on their learning process, offering immediate feedback to students' performance and having regular communication with students. Then teachers are viewed to play the role as the facilitator in developing students' positive affective factors so that students' interest and enthusiasm in English learning can be aroused and maintained, their confidence can be gained and their negative affective factors can be hopefully hindered. The last point about significance of teachers' role lies in the fact that students eagerly expect teachers to create the appropriate English learning environment in which students can benefit from democratic and friendly teacher-student relationships and improve their English proficiency as well as the autonomous ability.

B. Analysis of Teachers' Actual Behavior Section

The second research question attempts to find whether teachers' actual behavior matches students' expectations. The following Table I provide the frequency and percentage of all the items in this section, which can show a wealth of information about the respondents' answers to 23 statement items in Section Three.

TABLE I
FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS' BEHAVIOR

Item	A	B	C	D	E
Advocating autonomy	35(12.1%)	113(39.1%)	106(36.7%)	33(11.4%)	2(0.7%)
Communication	15(5.2%)	67(23.2%)	109(37.7%)	88(30.4%)	10(3.5%)
Plan-making	20(6.9%)	47(16.3%)	103(35.6%)	85(29.4%)	34(11.8%)
Learning strategies	25(8.7%)	102(35.3%)	125(43.3%)	29(10%)	7(2.4%)
Providing chances	36(12.5%)	85(29.4%)	106(36.7%)	55(19%)	6(2.1%)
Class activities	83(28.7%)	91(31.5%)	71(24.6%)	37(12.8%)	7(2.4%)
After-class activities	62(21.5%)	85(29.4%)	85(29.4%)	43(14.9%)	14(4.8%)
Reading	33(11.4%)	93(32.2%)	100(34.6%)	53(18.3%)	10(3.5%)
Reference books	14(4.8%)	47(16.3%)	115(39.8%)	93(32.2%)	20(6.9%)
Websites	14(4.8%)	40(13.8%)	87(30.1%)	95(32.9%)	53(18.3%)
Self-reflection	18(6.2%)	61(21.1%)	99(34.3%)	86(29.8%)	25(8.7%)
Journal-keeping	23(8%)	54(18.7%)	89(30.8%)	92(31.8%)	31(10.7%)
Emails	22(7.6%)	48(16.6%)	67(23.2%)	87(30.1%)	65(22.5%)
Grading	75(26%)	98(33.9%)	91(31.5%)	19(6.6%)	6(2.1%)
Learning Progress	28(9.7%)	77(26.6%)	102(35.3%)	65(22.5%)	17(5.9%)
Self-evaluation	23(8%)	44(15.2%)	101(34.9%)	90(31.1%)	30(10.4%)
Interest	47(16.3%)	77(26.6%)	104(36%)	50(17.3%)	11(3.8%)
Confidence	72(24.9%)	95(32.9%)	82(28.4%)	32(11.1%)	8(2.8%)
Negative affection	33(11.4%)	76(26.3%)	100(34.6%)	63(21.8%)	16(5.5%)
Speaking bravely	104(36%)	111(38.4%)	44(15.2%)	24(8.3%)	5(1.7%)
Atmosphere	62(21.5%)	83(28.7%)	91(31.5%)	47(16.3%)	6(2.1%)
Role	45(15.6%)	83(28.7%)	104(36%)	36(12.5%)	8(2.8%)
Match	18(6.2%)	131(45.3%)	15(5.2%)	31(10.7%)	74(25.6%)

Obtained data are categorized into three basic scales in Section Three where originally there are five choices corresponding to one statement item: fulfillment, unfulfillment and divergence. If the item gets the total percentage of Choice A and B that exceeds 50% from the respondents, it is accepted that teachers can basically fulfill the practice which corresponds to the mentioned statement item. On the contrary, if the total percentage of Choice D and E overruns 50%, teachers are considered to have failed to carry out their roles to develop learner autonomy in their teaching practice. According to the respondents, many teachers can focus more attention on cultivating students' awareness of English autonomous learning and also develop students' communicative competence by encouraging them to take active part in various language activities whether in class or out of class. Meanwhile, the teachers can monitor students by carefully grading their homework and offering corresponding remarks. Also, teachers are viewed to have an effect

on developing students' confidence and courage in the course of English learning and creating the favorable English learning atmosphere in class. However, the percentages these items get separately range from 50.2% to 74.4%, which is far smaller than the percentages of corresponding items in Section Two that almost shoot to 80%. Thus teachers' actual teaching behavior is in less conformity with students' expectations. Then Item B10 (51.2%) and Item B13 (52.6%) go to unfulfillment scale. It clearly shows that teachers lack a sense of the application of Internet resources to guide students to learn autonomously, which results in less emphasis on monitoring and evaluating students by email or in other Internet channels. More importantly, there are many items about which respondents have divergent opinions, which exactly show that teachers in some aspects fail to fulfill their duty in developing learner autonomy. More specifically, less communication with students, less guidance in helping students make plans for English learning, less instruction about English learning strategies, fewer chances of practicing these learning strategies, less monitoring and evaluation for students in various ways along with less assistance in overcoming students' negative affection in the case of teachers, without any doubt hinder teachers from enhancing students' English autonomous learning ability to a great extent.

Considering all the above data analysis, it can follow that in the broad sense teachers' actual behavior fails to correspond with students' beliefs about teachers' role in promoting learner autonomy despite of the fact that 51.5% respondents agree that their English teachers' actual performance matches their perceptions.

C. Analysis of Students' Beliefs in Terms of Different Levels

Since the subjects in this study are under a three-level system, and at the same time the study intends to obtain more information about students' perceptions of teachers' role, it is necessary to find out whether there are some differences between students of different levels in their beliefs about teachers' role in developing learner autonomy by employing One-way ANOVA analysis provided by the software SPSS.

TABLE II
ONE-WAY ANOVA RESULTS ABOUT SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES AMONG THE THREE LEVELS

Item	Level	Level	Sig.	Is there statistically significant difference between the two levels?
A5 No teachers' instruction	A	B	.003	Yes
	A	C	.000	Yes
	B	C	.665	No
A14 Encouragement	A	B	.133	No
	A	C	.879	No
	B	C	.044	Yes

As shown in the above Table II, among the three groups of students there are significant differences on two items. Item A5 states that students can learn English autonomously without teachers' class instruction. Then the means of LA, LB and LC students on this item are respectively 3.2424, 2.7473, 2.6162, so LA students are inclined to disagree with this opinion while LB and LC students tend to hold it. Meanwhile, the significance value for LA and LB students is 0.003, which is less than 0.05, so there is a significant difference between them. Likewise, the significance value for LA and LC students is 0.000, which is obviously smaller than 0.05, so a significant difference also exists between them. Therefore, LB and LC students are more likely to believe that students can autonomously learn English well without teachers' instruction than LA students. Item A14 means that teachers should encourage students to participate in class language communicative activities such as debates, speeches, group discussion and role-play performance. The means for LA, LB and LC students on this item are 1.6667, 1.9121, 1.6061 separately and also the significance value for LB and LC students is 0.044, which is less than 0.05. So there is a significant difference between LB and LC students, and LC students more prefer teachers to encourage them to get engaged in these communicative activities to practice English than LB students. As for other items in Section Two, their significance values are all more than 0.05, so there are no significant differences for them.

V. DISCUSSION

Through all the above analysis, we have obtained a great deal of information about teachers' role in developing learner autonomy from students' perspectives. Below the discussion will be carried out in the hope of answering the three research questions put forward in the study. It can be found that students' beliefs about their teachers' role in promoting learner autonomy that have been explored are in agreement with those stated by scholars and teachers in Literature Review part. That is, the study indicates that students' perceptions about teachers' role correspond with scholars and teachers' opinions. Likewise, from the students' perspectives, teachers are more favorably expected to serve as the guides, facilitators, instructors, monitors, evaluators, positive affection developers and atmosphere creators. Moreover, some of teachers' actual performance fails to live up to students' expectations, which should deserve our attention in the study. In addition, no significant differences have been found for most of the items about learners' belief among the three groups of subjects. Besides, it is true that in the study LB and LC students are more likely to hold that they can autonomously learn English well without teachers' instruction than LA ones. Also, LC students more favor their English teachers to encourage them to participate in class communicative activities than LB ones.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on all the above analysis, we can get a list of major findings in the process of exploring the three research questions. As for teachers' role in developing students' English autonomous learning ability, students' perceptions are in agreement with scholars and teachers' opinions. From students' perspectives, teachers are considered to play an important and essential role in developing learner autonomy. Their roles are highlighted as follows: they are viewed to have a major role to play in teaching students' English learning strategies; they are expected to devote more attention to monitoring and evaluating students' English learning process in various ways; they should be responsible for developing students' positive affection and overcoming negative counterpart; meanwhile, teachers should be responsible for creating the appropriate learning environment. Besides, broadly speaking, teachers' actual behavior doesn't match students' expectations though there still exists certain agreement between teachers' performance in class and students' perceptions. The following points are brought to stress the discrepancy between teachers' actual performance and students' expectations: a lack of teachers' communication with students about their English learning problems, inadequate guidance from teachers in helping students make English learning plans, deficient instruction from teachers about English learning strategies and scarce chances provided by teachers to practice these learning strategies, insufficient work for teachers in monitoring and evaluating students' English learning in various ways as well as unsatisfactory application of positive affective factors to students' English learning and teaching by teachers all go contrary to students' expectations. What's more, LB and LC students are more likely to believe that students can autonomously learn English well without teachers' instruction than LA ones, which is attributed to LB and LC students' higher English proficiency compared with LA ones'. Meanwhile, LC students more favor their English teachers to encourage them to take part in class communicative activities such as debates, speeches, group discussion and role-play performance to practice English than LB ones.

Facing the discrepancy between teachers' behavior and students' expectations in the current college English teaching, we would like to propose some suggestions here to college English teachers.

(1) Providing English learning strategies instruction for students

According to the survey, many students think that their teachers seldom train their learning strategies while students tend to expect a good commanding of learning strategies. Thus teachers should be aware of students' firm belief in getting more knowledge about learning strategies from their teaching in the English learning process. Meanwhile, teachers must realize that "teaching is no longer seen as imparting and doing things to the students, but is redefined as facilitation of self-directed learning" (Heron, 1989, p. 12). In other words, the task of a teacher is "teaching students how to learn rather than merely 'covering' a fixed curriculum (Gross, 1992, p. 141)". So it is hoped that teachers should introduce learning strategies and study skills integrated with their regular class teaching and also provide possible chances for students to practice them, which is also compatible with the requirements of college English teaching. Only in this way can teachers make it possible for students to have necessary independence and self-reliance to keep on learning after they leave the classrooms or even the schools, thus becoming autonomous learners.

(2) Monitoring and evaluating students' English learning in various ways

As the above-mentioned results show, teachers are considered to focus inadequate attention on monitoring and evaluating students' work. However, it is accepted that teachers can develop students' autonomous learning ability by monitoring and evaluating students' English learning. So teachers should regularly monitor and evaluate students in different ways. For instance, getting students to keep an English journal is one of effective ways for teachers to get more information about their students, such as their interests, their reflection on English learning, their strengths and weaknesses of their English learning. In addition, with the wide use of Internet, teachers can make good use of Internet resources such as emails, on-line chatting, and BBS to monitor and evaluate students outside the classroom by communicating with them and offering appropriate guidance and suggestions. Indeed, teachers are supposed to encourage students to get more involved in the electrical means of communication.

(3) Applying affective factors to the teaching

Affective factors play an important role in foreign language teaching and learning, which have attracted more and more attention in education. Affection is characterized as the attitudes people hold towards the world. Learners' feelings, emotion, interest, motivation, attitude, anxiety have a direct impact on their learning behavior and learning result (Arnold, 1999). Many teachers have realized the importance of applying affective factors to their teaching, but the results of the present study show that teachers have a hard time in dealing with affective factors in their actual teaching in accordance with students' expectations. Therefore, teachers should improve theoretical awareness of related studies in education and psychology. They also should pay more attention to students' negative factors and reduce or remove them to a maximum degree by becoming sensitive to students' English learning process. Meanwhile, teachers should be responsible for developing their positive affection by communicating more with students outside the classroom and helping them overcome learning difficulties etc.

(4) Varying teachers' role in different contexts

As the findings of the study indicate, LA students tend to be more dependent on their English teachers in English learning than LB and LC ones. Since LB and LC students are possessed with a comparatively higher English proficiency, they can study English autonomously with less instruction from the teachers. As for LA, they need be guided with more instruction from their teachers. Furthermore, LB students are less willing to be encouraged to

participate in communicative activities in class than LC ones, so teachers should arrange their teaching considering different students' likes and dislikes in a satisfactory way. Thus LC students can be greatly encouraged to get involved in class activities. At the same time, teachers are supposed to devote more energy to developing students' interest and enthusiasm in communicative activities. It therefore follows that facing different students, to be exact, students with different English proficiency, teachers should offer appropriate guidance, instruction and help in developing learner autonomy after knowing and understanding more about students. In other words, in different contexts, teachers should provide corresponding guidance for students in terms of their different English proficiency in an attempt to promote students' English autonomous learning ability and eventually facilitate students' progress in English learning.

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