INFLUENTIAL FACTORS ON VIETNAMESE NON-ENGLISH MAJORED STUDENTS' AUTONOMY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING: A CASE STUDY AT TRA VINH UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM

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Abstract – *Learner autonomy plays a crucial role in language acquisition, particularly in English as a foreign language contexts. This mixed-methods study aims to investigate the internal and external factors influencing English language learning autonomy among non-English majors at a university in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Ninety second-year students from diverse fields participated in a structured questionnaire, while five students were further engaged in semi-structured interviews. Results reveal that high motivation and effective self-regulated learning strategies positively demonstrate greater learner autonomy, while low self-confidence in real-life English communication remains a challenge for students to increase their autonomy as internal factors. Additionally, the study highlights the crucial role of a supportive educational environment, teacher support, and technological access as external factors in fostering learner autonomy. Based on these findings, the research proposes recommendations for enhancing learner autonomy in English language learning by leveraging these identified factors.*

Keywords: external factors, internal factors, learner autonomy, motivation, self-confidence.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, English is often a crucial tool for future careers and academic pursuits, so English proficiency is no longer a luxury, but an essential skill to possess. While English majors dedicate their studies to mastering the language, a significant portion of university students are not majoring in English. For these students, their path to fluency may not have a clear roadmap. This is where the concept of learner autonomy which allows individuals to take control of their own learning becomes paramount. Benson [1] notes that several research investigations have shown the role of learner autonomy in the process of language acquisition. Non-English majors frequently have difficulties in increasing their autonomy in English learning, which might have an effect on their motivation and engagement [2]. Duong My Tham et al. [3] contend that it is of the utmost importance to have an understanding of the preparation of non-English majors for autonomy, which includes factors such as self-awareness, self-efficacy, and motivation levels. According to research conducted by Wiranti et al. [4] and Karatas et al. [5], students who have a greater degree of autonomy in their language learning tend to have better outcomes in terms of language acquisition.

In the context of a university in the Mekong Delta, the researchers notice that non-English majored students generally follow a foreign language curriculum that focuses less on complex linguistic knowledge compared to major students. They have a limited amount of time to learn the language, so they need to find ways to enhance their knowledge and practice on their own. These students may not have as many chances to practice the language in academic settings or daily conversations. By exploring the specific factors that influence learner autonomy, teachers can develop targeted strategies and support systems to empower this large student group.

Therefore, understanding the factors influencing non-English majors' autonomy in English as

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a foreign language (EFL) learning, which is the primary aim of the current research, holds immense value for teachers and ultimately benefits the students themselves as well as fills a critical gap in the literature. As teachers, by supporting their autonomy, they empower them to become self-directed learners, paving the way for lifelong success in English language acquisition. They can pinpoint the factors that hinder or promote their student autonomy, they can tailor their teaching styles and curriculum design by incorporating more self-directed learning activities, providing resources for independent practice, or fostering a classroom environment that encourages initiative and self-reflection. In order to achieve the aforementioned aim, this study addresses the research question: What are the internal and external factors that influence Vietnamese non-English majored students in English language learning?

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Learner autonomy*

Learner autonomy in the context of English language acquisition is a concept that has been defined in various ways by different researchers. According to Borg et al. [6], learner autonomy is the capacity of a learner to define learning objectives, control learning activities, and display a favorable attitude toward learning activities in order to work independently, self-regulate learning, and evaluate one's own learning results. Similarly, Melani [7] defines learner autonomy as the ability of learners to take control of their own learning process. It involves students being responsible for their learning, making decisions, and actively engaging in their educational journey [8]. In conclusion, learner autonomy is crucial in language learning as it allows individuals to develop a deep awareness of the learning process, take responsibility for their learning, plan, monitor, evaluate their progress, and transfer their knowledge to different contexts.

B. *The role of learner autonomy in EFL learning*

Learner autonomy plays a pivotal role in successful English language acquisition. Xu [9] has

shown a positive relationship between learner autonomy and English language achievement. When students have higher autonomy in their learning such as being proactive, setting their own goals, and monitoring their progress, they tend to perform better in English language learning. This insight is useful for both teachers and students because it suggests that fostering learner autonomy might be an effective way to improve language achievement.

To foster students' autonomy in English language education, teachers play a significant role because they are responsible for teaching students learning strategies, monitoring and evaluating their progress, creating a positive learning environment, and helping students overcome obstacles [10]. Additionally, the nature of the pedagogical dialogue between teachers and students is crucial in developing autonomy, as learning is a product of interaction and interdependence [11]. In conclusion, learner autonomy is fundamental in English language education as it empowers students to take ownership of their learning process, make informed decisions, and actively engage in their educational journey. Teachers play a crucial role in fostering autonomy by providing support, and guidance, and creating a conducive learning environment. Autonomy is closely linked to language proficiency and academic achievement, making it a key aspect of successful language learning.

C. *Factors influencing learner autonomy in EFL learning*

Internal factors

Factors influencing EFL students' autonomy in learning English encompass a variety of elements that impact their ability to take control of their learning process. Motivation and attitude towards English learning are crucial components that affect learner autonomy [12]. Students' motivation levels play a significant role in their willingness to engage autonomously in the learning process. Anxiety, such as test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, can hinder motivation and self-regulated English learning [13]. Previous

language learning experiences also shape EFL students' autonomy. Students who have had positive experiences in language learning tend to exhibit higher levels of autonomy [14]. Gholami [15] mentions that self-confidence in language learning is an essential factor influencing learner autonomy. When students lack confidence, have a dependency on teachers, or face motivational challenges, their autonomy in EFL learning is compromised. Additionally, EFL students' language proficiency levels have a substantial effect on their autonomy in learning English [16]. Higher proficiency levels allow students to engage more independently in self-regulated learning activities, which are crucial for successful language acquisition [17]. Moreover, students' beliefs about autonomous language learning are associated with factors such as English proficiency, attitudes towards studying English, and language learning behaviors outside the classroom [18].

External factors

While internal factors play a pivotal role in shaping a student's ability to become autonomous in learning English, external factors are equally influential. These factors originate from the environment in which learning takes place and involve a variety of elements from educational settings, societal influences, and technological advancements.

To begin with, the role of teachers and educational institutions is crucial in fostering learner autonomy. Teachers' beliefs and practices can either support or hinder the development of autonomy among EFL students. Gholami [15] and Saeed [19] suggest that teacher scaffolding, peer intervention, and the use of social media platforms can enhance students' autonomy, emphasizing the importance of teacher support in autonomy development. Furthermore, Ghaffari et al. [20] highlight the impact of instructional conversations on the oral autonomy of EFL students, indicating that pedagogical approaches can influence students' autonomy levels. Moreover, students' beliefs and perceptions about the methods and activities their teachers

use in their English classes are determining factors that can affect their competence and efficiency in English classrooms [21]. The approach and methodology adopted by teachers and institutions significantly affect the development of autonomy in EFL students. Traditional teacher-centered methodologies that focus on rote learning and passive reception do not encourage students to take responsibility for their learning. In contrast, learner-centered approaches, which include task-based learning, cooperative learning, and problem-solving activities, promote independent thinking and self-regulation. Moreover, the teacher's role as a facilitator rather than a dictator of knowledge is crucial; providing guidance and support can nurture an environment where students feel empowered to explore and learn independently [21]. Peer interactions also significantly influence autonomy; supportive peers can encourage risk-taking and experimentation in learning, while competitive or unsupportive peer environments might stifle these tendencies [22].

Societal expectations and cultural norms also play a vital role in shaping EFL students' autonomy. Keumala et al. [23] emphasize the influence of socio-cultural factors can significantly impact students' drive to learn English. Additionally, societal and curricular factors can affect the feasibility of promoting learner autonomy, underscoring the need to consider broader societal contexts in autonomy development [24].

Furthermore, access to English language resources is essential for fostering learner autonomy [25]. The availability and quality of learning resources are vital external factors that impact EFL students' autonomy. Access to a rich array of resources such as libraries, language labs, online databases, and multimedia content can enhance a learner's ability to pursue self-directed learning. Lack of such resources, on the other hand, can limit a student's ability to explore and learn beyond the classroom setting. The utilization of technology, such as computer-assisted language learning, multimedia, and web technologies, also enhances learner autonomy by providing personalized and collaborative learning experiences

[26]. Technologies such as the Internet, educational software, and mobile applications provide unprecedented access to information and learning tools. These resources enable EFL students to engage with authentic language content, interact with native speakers around the world, and practice language skills at their own pace and according to their personal learning preferences.

D. Related studies on learner autonomy

The studies conducted by various researchers over recent years provide factors influencing learner autonomy among Vietnamese EFL students, highlighting the diversity of methodologies and findings. Tran Quoc Thao et al. [27] employed a qualitative approach to explore the impact of personal attitudes, educational environments, and the perceived relevance of autonomous activities on learner autonomy in a portfolio-based writing course. They discovered that these elements significantly influenced students' support for or resistance to autonomous learning. Similarly, Nguyen Van Son et al. [28] used a mixed-methods approach, including a large-scale survey and interviews, to identify that students' beliefs about learning, teaching methods, and teacher roles are critical in shaping learner autonomy. Their study aligns with Tran Thi Bich Tram et al.'s findings [29] by underscoring the influence of personal beliefs and instructional approaches.

In a more specific educational setting, Tran Thi Bich Tram et al. [29] at Van Lang University also adopted a mixed-methods approach to investigate factors affecting learner autonomy. They highlighted the roles of motivation, teaching materials, and educational policies, suggesting that these components are crucial for fostering autonomy in English major classrooms. This finding complements the work of Phuong Hoang Yen et al. [30], who demonstrated a positive correlation between learner autonomy, motivation, and English proficiency among university students, thereby confirming the importance of motivational factors and engaged learning practices.

Nguyen Anh Thi et al. [31] expanded the scope of inquiry into the determinants of learner autonomy by conducting a quantitative survey that identified voluntariness, learner choice, adaptability, peer collaboration, and perceptions of the teacher's role as key. Their emphasis on voluntariness and adaptability suggests additional dimensions that are pivotal for enhancing learner autonomy, aligning with the broader themes identified in other studies.

Lastly, Tran Quoc Thao [32] focused specifically on vocabulary learning, revealing a cognitive acknowledgment of the importance of learner autonomy among students but noting a lack of affective and behavioral engagement. This study highlights a significant gap between understanding the concept of autonomy and actually implementing autonomous learning behaviors, a challenge also implied in the other studies concerning the effectiveness of educational strategies and environments. In conclusion, the aforementioned studies primarily focus on understanding learner autonomy among English majors or within specific language domains. Research on learner autonomy among non-English major students remains limited, especially within the context of a university in the Mekong Delta. Therefore, exploring the factors that influence non-English majors' autonomy in English language learning is not just another research topic – it's a key to unlocking their full potential. This study holds the promise of empowering a diverse population of learners, equipping them with the tools they need to achieve fluency and navigate the globalized world with confidence.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

This study involves 90 students, including 49 females and 41 males, ranging in age from 18 to 22. The participants are currently second-year students majoring in medicine, information technology, accounting, banking finance, and law at Tra Vinh University, Tra Vinh Province, Vietnam. These participants were selected using a convenience sampling method because non-English majors offer a different perspective on language

learning compared to English majors. Their approach to independent learning may be influenced by their different reasons for learning English like personal interest or career development. These students are currently enrolled in General English 4, part of a series of general English courses. In this English program implemented at the university, there are four courses with a total duration of 270 periods, taught over four semesters. The main teaching materials are KET and PET Objectives, published by Cambridge University Press, which integrate the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The students have experienced a variety of beneficial activities both inside and outside the classroom.

B. Research design

A mixed-methods research design employed in this study utilizes a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to investigate the factors influencing Vietnamese non-English majored students' autonomy in their English language learning. This study is carried out over a period of four months from January to April 2024. By combining a structured questionnaire with semi-structured interviews, according to Almalki [33], the study ensures a thorough understanding of the topic and strengthens the validity and reliability of the findings. The questionnaire allows for the systematic collection of quantitative data from a large group, while the interviews offer detailed qualitative insights into the individual experiences and perspectives of the participants.

C. Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire used in this study is adapted based on Gholami's questionnaire [15] including three main sections. The first section is about the background information of the participants such as their gender, age, majors, English learning experiences, and textbooks used in their English courses. The second section is designed to assess internal factors such as motivation, self-confidence, language learning strategies, and self-assessment during their English learning process (16 items). The external factors are in the

third section of the questionnaire exploring educational environment, teacher support, peer influence, technological access, and cultural influence (19 items). This data collection method allows for the efficient analysis of a large dataset, enabling the researchers to apply statistical tests to validate the findings and draw significant conclusions about the population under study. The standardized format of a questionnaire ensures that all participants are responding to the same questions, thereby increasing the reliability of the data collected. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 25 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to measure the reliability of the questionnaire and to perform descriptive statistical analysis based on mean scores.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, five out of 90 participants took part in semi-structured interviews in person to get insights into the perception of the internal and external factors influencing their learning autonomy. The researchers record and transcribe the interviewee responses, then analyze the data using the thematic analysis method.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

In this session, a comprehensive analysis of internal and external factors influencing EFL students' autonomy in learning English is provided. The factors have been categorized based on their mean scores, reflecting the varying degrees of influence they have on students' autonomous learning behaviors.

Internal factors influencing learner autonomy

Regarding internal factors, the overall assessment of internal factors influencing the autonomy of EFL students in their English learning presents a mean score of 3.62, with a standard deviation of 0.388. This result indicates a generally positive but moderate perception of how internal characteristics such as motivation, self-confidence, and personal learning strategies support autonomous learning. The mean score reflects that students recognize a certain level of effectiveness in these

internal factors towards fostering their independence in learning English. Meanwhile, the relatively low standard deviation suggests a fairly consistent experience among students regarding the impact of these internal factors, pointing towards a homogeneous perception within the student cohort. This underscores the importance of strengthening internal drivers of learning autonomy to further enhance educational outcomes in language learning contexts. Table 1 illustrates the detailed mean scores of the highlighted items.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of internal factors affecting participants' autonomy in learning English

Items	Mean	SD
I view learning English as important for my future career.	4.18	.712
I view learning English as important for my personal development.	4.07	.700
I regularly set specific goals for my English learning.	3.78	.614
I adjust my learning plan based on my periodic self-assessments.	3.77	.808
I am aware of the specific skills in English I need to improve.	3.76	.852
I often experiment with different strategies to see which works best for my English learning.	3.63	.771
I trust my skills in English during conversations with people who can speak English.	3.44	.602
I frequently evaluate my progress in learning English.	3.42	.719
I actively seek out new methods and resources to improve my English skills.	3.34	.781
I can overcome challenges in learning English without needing much help.	3.33	.703
I am confident in using English in real-life situations without assistance.	3.28	.704
Overall mean score of Internal factors	**3.62**	**.388**

More specifically, the factors that students value most are closely tied to their personal and professional aspirations. The most highly rated factor is the importance of learning English for future career opportunities, with a mean score of 4.18 and a standard deviation of 0.712. This indicates a strong motivational driver, as students recognize the critical role English plays in their career development. Following closely is the importance of English for personal development,

scoring a mean of 4.07 with a standard deviation of 0.700, suggesting that students also view English proficiency as a key component of their personal growth.

Additionally, factors demonstrate a moderate influence on learning autonomy. The practice of setting specific learning goals has a mean score of 3.78 (SD = 0.614), highlighting that students are actively engaging in planning and setting objectives for their language acquisition. Adjusting learning plans based on self-assessment scores a mean of 3.77 with a standard deviation of 0.808, which indicates that while students are attempting to tailor their learning strategies, there is variability in how effectively they implement these adjustments. Awareness of specific skills that need improvement is also notable with a mean score of 3.76 and a standard deviation of 0.852, pointing to a good level of self-awareness among students, albeit with some inconsistency. Experimenting with different learning strategies has a mean score of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 0.771, reflecting a willingness to explore various approaches, though possibly with varying degrees of success and commitment.

Areas where students feel less capable or confident are reflected in the lowest scoring factors. The average score for confidence in using English during conversations is 3.44, with a standard deviation of 0.602. This indicates a noticeable difference in students' confidence levels when it comes to using the language in real-life situations. The evaluation of progress in learning English shows an average of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 0.719. This indicates that there is a need for more structured and frequent self-assessment practices. Finally, the pursuit of new techniques and materials to enhance English proficiency has the lowest score, averaging 3.34 with a standard deviation of 0.781. This suggests a hesitancy or challenge in discovering and embracing fresh learning resources and methods.

The interview results from some participants confirm that they initially engage in English language learning because they recognize the benefits of English for their future life and career:

'I am oriented that English will be useful... in the process of doing research, which is my interest in studying medical field because I must read a lot of English documents.' [34]

'After completing these four General English courses, I plan to continue studying at a language center to improve my communicative English along with taking a specialized English course at the university. I hope this will be useful for my future job.' [35]

'If I am good at English, I will have a better chance of getting good jobs, earning more money, traveling to different countries, talking with foreigners, or introducing the Vietnamese culture to foreigners.' [36]

The responses aforementioned show participants' clear goals when learning English which demonstrate a higher level of commitment and focus on their language learning journey. From that, they plan their own strategies to enhance their English learning. Two participants point out:

'I have a notebook to write down my daily plan so that I have extra time to study. In class, I write down the key points the teachers teach me such as words, structures, knowledge about the culture. For each time I do that I learn the lesson once. It helps me to remember the lesson better.' [35] 'I improve my listening skill by passive listening. When I cook, I listen to English videos on YouTube because my teachers advise me to do that. For me, I think it is useful. I can acquire English accent, vocabulary naturally.' [37]

However, most of the participants appear to be less confident in using English to communicate in real-life situations due to their lack of opportunities to practice. It seems to be a challenge to enhance learner autonomy. One participant mentions: 'I am not confident enough to speak English when I meet a foreigner because I only have chances to speak in class, but not much. In daily life outside the classroom, I just use Vietnamese.' [36]

External factors influencing learner autonomy

With regard to external factors, the overall analysis of external factors affecting EFL students' autonomy in learning English reveals a

mean score of 3.73 with a standard deviation of 0.461. This indicates a moderately positive perception among students regarding the effectiveness of various external influences on their ability to learn independently. The mean score suggests that, on average, students feel somewhat supported in their autonomous learning endeavors by the external factors presented. However, the standard deviation points to some variability in how students experience these influences, which could be attributed to differences in personal preferences, learning environments, and the availability of resources. This data highlights the need for a nuanced approach into addressing and enhancing the external factors that facilitate or impede students' autonomy in learning English. The details of the mean scores are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of external factors affecting participants' autonomy in learning English

Items	Mean	SD
My English teachers encourage me to learn independently.	4.01	.742
The learning spaces (libraries, study areas) at my institution are conducive to independent study.	3.98	.734
The curriculum at my educational institution supports independent learning.	3.87	.851
Watching English-language media (films, TV shows) makes me love learning English.	3.83	.811
Social media are valuable resources for practicing and improving my English.	3.81	.792
Technology plays a crucial role in my ability to learn English on my own.	3.78	.804
There are sufficient extracurricular activities related to English that encourage autonomous learning.	3.77	.912
Group projects and peer-to-peer activities help enhance my English skills.	3.77	.704
There is a positive competitive spirit among my peers that motivates me to improve my English.	3.59	.701
The teaching methods used by my English instructors promote self-directed learning.	3.51	.890
Overall mean score of external factors	**3.73**	**.461**

In particular, the data reveals that direct support from educational institutions and teachers significantly enhances learning autonomy among EFL students. The highest scoring factors include encouragement from teachers, with a mean score

of 4.01 and a standard deviation of 0.742, indicating that students greatly value and benefit from proactive encouragement to learn independently. Similarly, the infrastructure provided by educational institutions, such as libraries and study areas, also plays a vital role, receiving a mean score of 3.98 and a standard deviation of 0.734. Additionally, the curriculum that supports independent learning is another critical factor, scoring a mean of 3.87 with a standard deviation of 0.851. These factors collectively suggest that when students perceive strong institutional and educator support, their independence in learning notably increases.

The curriculum at educational institutions, designed to foster independent learning, is viewed positively with a mean score of 3.87, although it shows some variability in effectiveness. Similarly, consuming English-language media and using social media are both regarded as beneficial, with scores of 3.83 and 3.81, respectively, suggesting they are engaging and useful, but their impact fluctuates among students. The application of technology in learning English autonomously is recognized with a mean of 3.78 (SD = 0.804), highlighting its essential role, yet pointing to an uneven utilization among students. Extracurricular activities and group projects each scored a mean of 3.77, underscoring their potential to enhance language skills through practical engagement. However, the standard deviation for extracurricular activities is notably higher, indicating a greater inconsistency in their perceived effectiveness.

The least effective factors identified are the teaching methods used by instructors and the competitive spirit among peers. The teaching methods score the lowest, with a mean of 3.51 and a standard deviation of 0.890, suggesting a mismatch between current teaching strategies and the needs of autonomous students. While a positive competitive spirit among peers scores a mean of 3.59 with a standard deviation of 0.701, it indicates that competition alone does not significantly drive autonomy in learning.

The interview findings confirm that teach-ers play a supporting role in enhancing learner autonomy through encouragement and positive feedback. One participant highlights:

'In speaking skills, when I present an unconvincing opinion, or make pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary mistakes, the teacher never scolds me. Instead, she repeats the correct sentence in English and encourage me to repeat it to help me remember. When I speak correctly, she praises me and gives me stickers so I can earn more reward points. I feel more motivated to learn English.' [34]

Another participant also values teachers' role in reminding them of the purpose of learning. She states:

'The teacher always reminds us that we are studying for ourselves, not for anyone else. Try your best to learn English for the future. Make your plan for independent learning.' [38]

Furthermore, two out of five participants value some activities that incorporate games and quizzes to aid vocabulary retention. They report that they like their teachers to use games and quizzes to facilitate their vocabulary learning, making them feel less stressed and more motivated.

For the educational environment, four participants feel satisfied with the content of the English curriculum, the library, and the self-study zone where they can learn with their friends. They are allowed and instructed to use various technology tools to improve their English because they believe that technology plays a crucial role in language learning, with tools like Grammarly and AI-powered platforms aiding in writing and grammar improvement. One participant illustrates:

'When given a writing assignment, I first plan what I want to write in Vietnamese before translating it into English. If I don't know English words, I check the dictionary. When I have a complete writing sample, I use Grammarly to check structures.' [37]

B. Discussion

This session discusses some similarities and differences between the research findings and

the factors reviewed in the literature as well as provides the explanation for those similarities and differences.

In the results of internal factors, the importance of motivation is strongly underscored by students' recognition of English proficiency as essential for career and personal development. This alignment with the literature underscores motivation as a critical driver of autonomy, where high aspirations towards English proficiency relate to higher autonomy in learning practices. This finding resonates with the views presented by Tran Quoc Thao et al. [27] and Nguyen Van Son et al. [28] who suggest that motivation enhances the willingness to engage autonomously in learning. Additionally, the role of self-regulated learning strategies, including goal setting and adjusting learning plans, also finds echoes in both the literature and the study results. Students' engagement in planning and modifying their learning approaches indicates an active implementation of self-regulated learning practices, aligning with Duong Minh Tuan's observations [14] about the impact of prior positive learning experiences on fostering autonomy. However, the variability in how effectively these strategies are implemented points to the need for more structured guidance in self-regulation, as suggested by the moderate influence these factors have on learner autonomy. Unlike a study focusing on English majors conducted by Tran Thi Bich Tram et al. [29], this study reveals lower confidence among non-English majors in using English for real-life communication. The results emphasize the role of self-confidence in using English in conversational settings is highlighted as a lower-scoring factor, which suggests a challenge in applying language skills in practical contexts. This suggests that non-English majors may face unique challenges in developing communicative competence due to limited opportunities for practice.

In terms of external factors, it is clear that students highly appreciate direct educational support, such as the guidance of teachers and the resources offered by institutions. This is consistent with prior research by Nguyen Anh Thi

et al. [31] which emphasizes the importance of teacher scaffolding in creating environments that foster independent learning. The findings indicate that students view strong encouragement from teachers as essential for fostering autonomy.

Moreover, the previous studies carried out by Nguyen Anh Thi et al. [31] highlight the importance of technological tools in giving students access to a wide range of resources and learning environments. The results from this study also show that technology is crucial in improving autonomy, but its impact on students differs. The differences in access and personal proficiency with technological tools might explain the variability observed. This suggests that although technology can empower students, its benefits are not evenly distributed.

While Nguyen Van Son et al.'s research [28] has emphasized the role of teaching methods in fostering autonomy, this study found mixed opinions among students regarding the effectiveness of their instructors' teaching methods in promoting self-directed learning. This discrepancy may be attributed to the specific context of non-English major classrooms, where teaching approaches might not be tailored to the unique needs and motivations of these learners.

Unlike earlier studies by Phuong Hoang Yen et al. [30], this research suggests that a competitive spirit among peers does not significantly influence learner autonomy among non-English majors. This could be due to the different priorities and learning goals of non-English majors compared to their English major counterparts.

In conclusion, previous research considers a wider range of external factors, such as societal and cultural norms, which may not be easily measured in the results but still have a significant impact. This underscores the disparity between theoretical knowledge of external factors and their actual, quantifiable effects, indicating the need for additional research and more focused interventions.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study explores the autonomy of EFL students in Tra Vinh Province and offers valuable insights into the internal and external factors that influence autonomous English learning at the university level. The findings highlight the importance of motivation and self-regulated learning strategies in promoting learner autonomy, in line with previous research. Furthermore, the findings confirm the importance of educational support, such as teacher guidance and access to resources, in improving students' capacity to regulate themselves and pursue independent learning paths. The study also emphasizes the important role of technology in making diverse learning resources more accessible. However, its impact on students can vary depending on their access to technology and their proficiency in using it.

There are a few limitations in the study that should be taken into account. Initially, it is worth noting that the sample size of 90 students, although sufficient for gaining initial insights, might not accurately reflect the diverse range of EFL students in Tra Vinh Province or other surrounding areas. Furthermore, the study's findings indicate that there may be other important factors, beyond those considered, that have a significant impact on autonomy. These factors include technology use and social influence, which vary in their effectiveness.

Further research can be conducted in several areas based on the limitations of this study. Studying the influence of technological skills and access on student independence could offer valuable insights into effectively incorporating technology in EFL learning settings. Furthermore, delving into the subjective aspects of how students perceive and engage with their educational environments could enhance the comprehension of the relationship between teacher practices and student autonomy. Additional research could explore how cultural and societal norms impact EFL students in various geographical or socio-economic settings, providing insights into the external influences at work. In addition, longi-

tudinal studies have the potential to monitor the development of students' autonomy over time. This can offer a more comprehensive understanding of how teaching practices and curriculum design interventions influence independent learning abilities. Researching pedagogical strategies that promote autonomy in EFL students can provide valuable guidance for teachers aiming to enhance autonomous learning in their classrooms. By focusing on these areas, future research can expand on the current findings to create more specific interventions and educational practices that foster autonomy in EFL students. This will ultimately lead to improved language learning outcomes.

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