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On English Teachers' Beliefs about Learner Autonomy

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Abstract: More and more scholars attach importance to learner autonomy in the field of foreign language teaching. Since students' autonomy is closely related to teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy, they have been studied by most scholars. However, there are relatively few studies on primary school English teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy. In order to fill this gap, this study mainly studied six primary school English teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy in Huidong County through interview. It was found that teachers' understanding of learner autonomy was relatively clear.

Keywords: Learner autonomy, English teacher, Teacher belief.

1. Introduction

Under the background of new curriculum reform, it is becoming more and more important for teachers to teach students how to learn. Therefore, learner autonomy has been emphasized by many scholars in the field of language teaching. Many scholars have their own opinions about what learner autonomy is. In Benson, learner autonomy was defined as "the capacity to take charge of one's own learning, was seen as a natural product of the practice of self-directed learning, or learning in which the objectives, progress and evaluation of learning are determined by the learner themselves"[1]. Whether students have ideas and abilities to learn independently has attracted public attention, but in fact, whether teachers consciously cultivate students' autonomous learning ability is also crucial to the development of learners' autonomy. Teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy can promote or hinder the development of students' learner autonomy to a great extent. Therefore, in recent years, more and more teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy have been extensively studied. However, most of the research objects are college English teachers, and few are primary school teachers. In order to bridge this gap, this paper mainly studies primary school English teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy in Huidong County. The six teachers interviewed come from three different rural primary schools. Huidong County is a less developed area with many rural primary schools. The rural primary schools in this area are small-sized, with only a few to a dozen students in a class, and even some grades are canceled because there are no students. Huidong County is chosen as the research area because the authors are familiar with this area and want to deepen their understanding of learner autonomy through the study.

2. Theoretical Framework

This part introduces the concepts of learner autonomy and teacher belief respectively. The first section is a comprehensive overview of the definition of learner autonomy, followed by the description of teacher belief. The relationship between these two concepts is also explained by relating to the existing theories.

2.1. Learner Autonomy

Autonomy first appeared in the Council of Europe's Modern Language Project. One of the great outcomes of which was the publication of Holec's seminal report, in which learner autonomy is defined as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning"[2]. This definition of learner autonomy has proved to be relatively stable and mature up to now, and it is still the most widely cited definition in the field of language[3].

Specific characteristics in Holec's[2] definition of learner autonomy include 1) determining the objectives; 2) defining the contents and progressions; 3) selecting methods and techniques to be used; 4) monitoring the procedure of acquisition; 5) evaluating what has been acquired. Besides, two features are notable. In the first place, autonomy is an attribute of the learner, or rather an ability, rather than a process. This ability is something that learners learn systematically, not something they are born with. As Dickinson[4] showed, autonomy is an attribute of learner, rather than learning situations. In the second place, autonomy refers to the potential ability of learners in the learning process rather than the specific behaviors of learners in the learning situation. In other studies on the definition of learner autonomy, those scholars used "capacity" and "take responsibility for" to replace "ability" and "take charge of" respectively. In the research of Little, learner autonomy was defined as "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action"[5]. Little[5] indicated that the content and process of learners' autonomous learning are closely related to a special psychological state of learners. When describing learner autonomy, Holec[2] emphasized the behavioral characteristics of learners in autonomous learning, while Little[5] put psychology at the center of learner autonomy and emphasized the autonomous behavior of learners due to psychological characteristics. Oxford also mentioned that "the psychological perspective examines mental and emotional characteristics of learners, who is viewed either as individuals or as members of a rather generalized social or cultural group"[6] when discussing the characteristics of learners.

To sum up, the authors are more inclined to Holec's[2] statement: learner autonomy is an acquired ability of learner rather than an innate one. Meanwhile, the authors also agree with Little's view that learner autonomy is a capacity to make decisions and be independent. Learner autonomy is not only the ability of learners in choosing, thinking and other aspects, but also the embodiment of their attitude towards learning.

2.2. Teacher Belief

Although the new curriculum reform emphasizes student-centeredness, it does not mean that the status of teachers is weakened, teachers still play an important role. At the same time, teachers' belief cannot be ignored. As mentioned in Little, "the development of autonomy in learners presupposes the development of autonomy in teachers"[7].

According to Skott[8], there is no unified definition of teachers' beliefs, but its core concept has been recognized, including four aspects: 1) beliefs are what an individual's mind thinks is true; 2) beliefs include both cognition and emotion; 3) beliefs are stable and stubborn, and their change usually requires long-term effort; 4) teachers' beliefs are the main determinant of teaching activities and students' learning. Pajares[9] defined teachers' beliefs from the perspective of pedagogy as teachers' thoughts on the curriculum design, learners, teachers' roles and other factors in language teaching. Through their own experience, each teacher forms different teacher beliefs, which influence teaching design and methods. Nespor pointed out four characteristics of beliefs' structure, including "existential presumption, alternativity, affective and evaluative loading and episodic structure"[10]. Teachers' beliefs are the understandings of teaching work and teachers' role with their feelings and experiences, and they are propositions or hypotheses.

To sum up, teachers' beliefs are teachers' personal views of teaching and learning. Teachers' beliefs are formed from their personal cognition and teaching experience and have a very close relationship with teaching activities and students' learning.

3. Methodology

This part mainly discusses the research methodology of this study, including participants, instruments, data collection and analysis, and finally mentions the limitations of the study.

3.1. Participants

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with six English teachers from primary schools in Huidong County. Among them, there were two teachers with teaching experience of less than nine years, two with teaching experience of 10-14 years, and two with teaching experience of more than 20 years. All of them are female teachers.

3.2. Instruments

The instrument of this study was semi-structured interview. The interview content was recorded with the consent of the interviewees. Before the interview, the interviewees completed a questionnaire about English teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy, which was based on Borg and Al-Busaidi's[11]. The interview outline was mainly carried out from two aspects: teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy and the problems they encountered in the process of promoting learner autonomy. According to the questionnaire results of each interviewee, in-depth questions would be asked to the individual interviewee for the prominent answers in the questionnaire.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The interview data was collected in the conference room and office of the school where the interviewees worked, and the interview schedule was arranged according to their free time. In consideration of the smoothness of the interview and the accuracy of the language, the interview was conducted in Chinese.

The analysis of interview data was firstly carried out by converting recorded interview content into written form. The second step was to analyze and classify the interview content[12]. This process involved carefully reading the interview content and grouping each interview question into a broader research topic. For example, "How do you understand learner autonomy" and "What roles do you think teachers play in learner autonomy" in the interview questions were classified as teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy. Detailed analysis and discussion were presented in the next part.

3.4. Limitations

This study mainly analyzed and discussed primary school English teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy through interview data. But there are still some limitations to the study. The first is the limited number of interviewees. As there were relatively few English teachers in the interviewees' area, six teachers were eventually interviewed. Therefore, during the interview, the researchers tried to explore the interviewees' views on learner autonomy as deeply as possible. Second, there were no male English teachers. The English teachers in the three rural primary schools were all female, and there were almost no male English teachers, leading to less comprehensive research results. Third, classroom observation is not used in this study. For the question of "How do you promote learner autonomy", the researchers could only elicit more views from interviewees during interview. The researchers also tried to get interviewees to give as many examples as possible to bolster the reliability of the data. Despite these limitations, the results of this study are true and reasonable.

4. Findings and Discussion

This part presents the findings and discussions of this study. Teachers' beliefs about four different aspects of learner autonomy are analyzed and discussed successively according to the interview data and questionnaire results.

4.1. Teachers' Beliefs About Learner Autonomy: Its Definition and Features

According to the questionnaire, the options for each question were set to: strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), unsure (U), agree (A) and strongly agree (SA). As Table 1 shows, teachers' recognition of "making choices about learning", "learning how to learn", "mastering one's learning", "evaluating one's learning", "confident" and "motivated" all reach more than 80%. It means that five teachers agree with these statements.

Table 1. About learner autonomy: its definition and features

Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA
Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn (Q4)	0%	0%	16.67%	66.67%	16.67%
Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence (Q13)	0%	0%	0%	66.67%	33.33%
Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy (Q28)	0%	0%	0%	66.67%	33.33%
Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy (Q29)	0%	16.67%	16.67%	33.33%	33.33%
The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy (Q31)	0%	0%	16.67%	83.33%	0%
Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated (Q32)	0%	0%	0%	83.33%	16.67%
To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning (Q35)	0%	0%	0%	66.67%	33.33%

According to the first question in the interview "As a language teacher, is learner autonomy a concern for you in your teaching process", all of the six teachers say that they all pay attention to the concept of learner autonomy, because they think learner autonomy is very essential to students' learning. From the second question "How do you understand learner autonomy", we can know teachers' specific views on the definition and features of learner autonomy. Here are some of their responses:

Teacher A: I think learner autonomy requires students to be relatively independent and not to rely too much on teachers for learning. Of course, this does not mean that they do not need teachers' help, but students should be able to study effectively when they are alone.

Teacher B: This (learner autonomy) is a kind of ability of students, but also shows the attitude of students to learn. Whether they (students) can find the direction of learning, whether they have the ability to learn independently. Meanwhile, they will take the initiative to learn and summarize.

The data shows four key words in teachers' definitions about learner autonomy: ability, independence, attitude and responsibility, which is basically consistent with the results of Borg and Al-Busaidi's that "Five concepts which recurred in the teachers' answers are responsibility (six mentions), control (five), independence (five), choice (four) and freedom (four)"[11]. Meanwhile, "initiative" and "learning needs" also appear frequently in this interview, which are mentioned by five teachers respectively.

As for the features of learner autonomy, teachers also expressed their views on this aspect:

Teacher C: At least they (students) are serious in class, they can finish their homework consciously after going home, and they can preview and review what they have learned.

Teacher D: I think autonomous students not only can finish the homework assigned by the teachers, but also discover new knowledge and learn on the basis of the original knowledge. They should be confident and not shy away from asking questions.

Teacher E: They can cooperate with teachers' instruction in class, and cooperate with classmates to learn. Students can show that they are motivated to learn and they are willing to learn.

Teacher F: Students should know how to learn and can actively choose English related content to learn. They can preview and review carefully, have courage to ask questions in class, confidently raise their hands to answer questions.

These statements show their views on the features of learner autonomy, focusing on students' classroom performance and task completion, especially students' preview and review of textbook knowledge. Several teachers mention that "learning method", "mastering learning rhythm" and "discovering and learning new knowledge" are similar to "selecting methods and techniques to be used", "defining the content and progressions" and "determining the objectives" in Holec[2].

Regarding Q29 (Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy), the teacher who chooses "disagree" explains in the interview:

Teacher E: If you are an entry-level autonomous learner, such as a primary school student, it is difficult to work alone and he need the help of a teacher. I agreed that learning to work alone is a feature of learner autonomy, but I don't think it is the center of learner autonomy.

The teacher thinks that the problem is mainly from the perspective of autonomous learners at the primary school level. She thinks that it is unreasonable to work alone as the center of learner autonomy. Though some primary school students are unable to work independently, if they have their own learning methods and they can decide what to learn, they are autonomous learners.

The data shows that primary school English teachers hold positive beliefs about learner autonomy, and at least their views on the definition and features of learner autonomy are consistent with the definition of relevant literature mentioned in the second part. At the same time, when teachers express their own ideas, they also take into account the differences between the primary school students and autonomous learners of other grades, because some conditions are less feasible for the primary school students. Features such as mastering their own learning progress, evaluating their own learning critically and thinking of learning as an act of self-responsibility are hard to spot in primary school students. However, it cannot be said that primary school students are not autonomous just because they do not have these features. The assessment standard of primary school students' autonomy should be lower. For example, some students can finish the tasks assigned by the teacher independently and have a serious attitude to study, so it can be said that they have a certain degree of autonomy.

4.2. Teachers' Beliefs About Teachers' Role in Learner Autonomy

As for the third question "What roles do you think teachers play in learner autonomy", almost all of the teachers tend to define their role as "a guide" or "a facilitator".

Teacher A: The teacher is mainly as a guide. the teacher's responsibility is to guide students to learn autonomous learning. The second role is to act as a facilitator, encouraging students to try to complete tasks on their own.

Teacher C: Guides. Teachers should lead students through themselves. If they want students to learn autonomous learning, teachers should also know how to learn autonomously and serve as a model for students. Then teachers are facilitators. Teachers provide relevant learning resources for students' needs and promote their autonomous learning.

The above teachers mainly divide the role of teachers into guides and facilitators. They all think that the main responsibility of the guide is to guide students to study independently, to correct students' learning attitude, to guide students to find their own learning methods and skills. At the same time, they all agree that teachers should be facilitators who actively provide learning resources to encourage and promote students' autonomous learning.

Teacher B: Teachers are leaders. Because teachers should correct students' learning attitude, teach them learning skills, and teach them how to divergent thinking, and the most important thing is to teach them how to learn autonomously.

Teacher F: Teachers are guides rather than leaders. Teachers should make the students understand what they need to learn and what they want to learn. Primary school students are not mature, and teachers need to lead them to learn step by step in many aspects. When teachers actively answer their questions, they will take the initiative to learn and find problems.

There are two teachers disputing the definition of the role of teacher. Teacher B believes that teachers are mainly leaders, while Teacher F identifies with guides more than leaders. Although their definitions of the teacher's role differ, their descriptions of teachers' duties are generally the same. They believe that teachers need to teach students to learn, to lead them to think and to learn on their own. Teacher B also explains that the leader she said does not mean that the teacher leads the class, and students are still the center in the teaching process.

The above data shows that teachers' role in learner autonomy can be summarized as resource providers, classroom organizers, problem solvers, interest raisers, attitude raisers and learning method cultivators. It is worth mentioning that a teacher believes that teachers should be able to learn autonomously, so that students can have opportunities to realize their autonomy. Teacher B emphasizes the importance of teachers' practice of learner autonomy. This view is consistent with "learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are interdependent then the promotion of learner autonomy depends on the promotion of teacher autonomy"[7].

Table 2 shows that teachers value their own roles in learner autonomy. They hold positive beliefs about the role of learner autonomy. Teacher B strongly agrees with Q8 (Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher) and Teacher E strongly disagrees with it. The specific ideas of the two teachers are shown in the interview.

Table 2. About teachers' role in learner autonomy

Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA
Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher (Q8)	16.67%	33.33%	0%	33.33%	16.67%
Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centred classrooms (Q17)	0%	33.33%	16.67%	33.33%	16.67%
Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching (Q19)	0%	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	0%
Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher (Q20)	0%	0%	0%	83.33%	16.67%
Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher (Q24)	0%	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	0%
The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy (Q33)	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%

Teacher B: My understanding of learner autonomy is that students need the assistance of teachers in the process of cultivating their autonomy, and after students have the ability to learn autonomously, they should have the ability to effectively learn autonomously without teachers.

Teacher E: Learner autonomy dose not necessarily mean learning without a teacher, but requires the teacher's cooperation under certain circumstances.

It can be seen that they have different understandings of this item, but they all recognize that students' learner autonomy needs teachers' cultivation and that learner autonomy is not completely separated from teachers.

As for Q17 (Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centred classrooms) and Q19 (Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching), teachers disagree with Q19 more than Q17. In Q17, three teachers agreed and two teachers disagree. This indicates that teacher-led classes still exist. Teachers support the "student-centered" class, but for primary school students, teachers still use teacher-led ways to teach.

Teacher C: In primary school classes, especially in the lower grades, teachers need to lead the class; otherwise, the class will be chaotic.

Teacher D: I try my best to carry out "student-centered" classes to make students think and learn more. This method is suitable for senior students in primary school, while junior students still need to be supervised by teachers.

The above data shows that teachers mainly define their roles in learner autonomy as guides and facilitators, They all agreed that they played a crucial role in learner autonomy, Although teachers are well aware of the role of student-centered classes, teacher-led classes are more common

because primary school students find it difficult to concentrate in class. All of the primary school teachers mentioned that primary school students are curious and active. If most of the class time is left to students to learn freely, it is difficult to continue. Although the traditional teacher-led ways of teaching is not conducive to the development of students' thinking and does not meet the standards of the new curriculum reform, it is still of great help to the education of primary school students.

4.3. Teachers' Beliefs About Students' Learner Autonomy

As for the fourth question "To what extent do you think your students are autonomous", teachers describe the degree of autonomy of their students at different grades.

Teacher A: Most of the students in the fifth grade are active, at least they can finish the preview before the class as I said just now. In addition to learning the knowledge in the textbook, a few students in grade 5 will also choose their favorite learning materials autonomously. When they find problems, they will search for information independently.

Teacher D: Students in fifth and sixth grades are better able to work independently and in groups. In addition, I found that some senior students would take the initiative to consider what they could try to learn, and they would ask me to recommend learning materials suitable for them.

Teacher E: Some students with good grades in the sixth grade have better autonomy. For example, they have thought about which part of their knowledge is weak, and then they will study independently and come to me to answer their doubts.

Teachers from the fifth-grade and sixth-grade say that students have some autonomy but still lack it. Senior students are mainly able to think on their own initiative and find their own way of learning. Some students with strong abilities even learn extracurricular knowledge independently, which shows that these students are interested in learning and know their reasons for learning.

Teacher E: Third and fourth-grade students lack autonomy, and it is difficult for them to monitor their learning process, requiring the presence of teachers to supervise. Most can complete basic tasks, such as active preview and review.

Teacher F: Most of the students in third grade are ordinary in their autonomy, especially the underachiever, whose ability of expression is relatively poor. There are a few outstanding students who take an active part in class activities and they have their own thoughts.

Teachers from grade three and grade four think that students lack autonomy, and they are easily distracted in class. They need teachers' constant attention and supervision before they can take action. When teachers give them a clear assignment, most of them will take the initiative to complete it, but some students are lazy. If students are left to do the task by themselves, they only chat or do something unrelated, which shows that they do not know the purpose of th study.

According to the interview data, teachers believe that most students lack autonomous learning ability. In primary schools, senior students' learner autonomy is better than that of junior students. Teachers mainly evaluate whether students have autonomy or not from the aspects of "completing tasks", "understanding learning needs", "monitoring the learning process", "independent learning ability", "group cooperation learning ability" and "selection of learning methods". Among them, lower grade students' ability to complete tasks is higher than other aspects, and the independent learning ability of a small part of the higher grade students is great. However, most students still rely on teachers. The ability to master the learning process and to select learning methods is relatively weak for most primary school students.

4.4. Teachers' Beliefs About the Contribution of Learner Autonomy to Students' Learning

According to the data in Table 3, six teachers agree that learner autonomy has a positive effect on a language learner's success. Five teachers agree that learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would, while one teacher is not sure about that. About the statement of "Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners", four teachers agree and two teachers are unsure.

Table 3. About the contribution of learner autonomy to students' learning

Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA
Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners (Q5)	0%	0%	33.33%	50%	16.67%
Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would (Q14)	0%	0%	16.67%	66.67%	16.67%
Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner (Q34)	0%	0%	0%	66.67%	33.33%

Teachers hold positive beliefs about the contribution of learner autonomy to students' learning. They make a specific explanation of the contribution of learner autonomy and their statements are listed.

Teacher A: It (learner autonomy) makes students more willing to speak English. For language learning, it is important that students are willing to speak.

Teacher C: If students can study autonomously, their grades will improve, so that they will feel that they have found the right way to study. It will increase their confidence and motivation to study.

Teacher D: Students will learn more knowledge outside the classroom, their language learning ability will also be improved. At the same time, autonomy can make students more interested in learning. After all, interest is the best teacher, so students will be happier in the learning process.

Teacher E: Learner autonomy can help students master more scientific learning methods and improve their learning efficiency. And autonomy can help students to study in a targeted way.

Teachers believe that the contribution of learner autonomy to students' learning include "being more willing", "being more motivated", "being more interested", "mastering correct learning methods", "being more efficient", "improving grades" and "acquiring more extracurricular knowledge". It is found that teachers recognize and have clear beliefs about the

contribution of learner autonomy. Since teachers strongly recognized the contribution of learner autonomy to students' language learning, it is necessary to study teachers' beliefs about the ways to promote learner autonomy.

Table 4 shows that teachers believe that students' decision-making ability, students' choice, group cooperative learning activities and student-centered classroom are conducive to the development of learner autonomy. About Q30 (Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the Internet promote learner autonomy), six teachers have a great dispute. Details are shown in the interview.

Table 4. About the ways to promote learner autonomy

Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA
Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone (Q3)	0%	0%	16.67%	66.67%	16.67%
Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy (Q7)	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%
Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choices in the kinds of activities they do (Q16)	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other (Q18)	0%	0%	16.67%	83.33%	0%
Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together (Q21)	0%	0%	16.67%	83.33%	0%
Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed (Q23)	0%	0%	0%	83.33%	16.67%
Co-operative group work activities support the development (Q25)	0%	0%	0%	83.33%	16.67%
Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials (Q26)	0%	0%	0%	66.67%	33.33%
Learner-centred classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy (Q27)	0%	0%	0%	83.33%	16.67%
Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the Internet promote learner autonomy (Q30)	0%	33.33%	33.33%	16.67%	16.67%

Teacher A: Before each new lesson, I would ask students to preview, and then I would ask the leader of each group to act as a little teacher to show their learning results. I would correct the mistakes in the process and supplement and summarize the knowledge in this lesson. I think this activity is good for their independent thinking ability.

Teacher E: In class, I will carry out exploratory activities, such as group discussion, and let students act as little teachers to teach. And I will carry out brainstorming to stimulate students' enthusiasm for participation. I will also assign after-class extension homework, provide students with learning materials, and let students find materials to study autonomously.

The above teachers adopt a relatively new teaching method in the classroom, which is to let the students act as the little teacher. This task is demanding for students, but it allows them to improve their comprehensive language skills. According to the teachers, students are very interested in this form of task, and some students in the class are very active and able to complete the task well. It is probably because primary school students find it interesting to play the lofty role of teacher. If the teacher gives them encouragement and praise after completing the task, they will continue their efforts. But what teachers do not mention in the interview is letting students decide what to learn, how to assess their learning and choose learning activities. Three teachers explain:

Teacher C: It is great to let students decide what they want to learn outside classroom, but it's harder in the classroom. Primary school students' ability to assess their learning is relatively poor. There were some tasks for students to assess their own homework, few students could complete.

Teacher D: Usually, teachers decide what activities to do, but it is also possible to give students several activities to choose. Although I have not done this practice yet. I have not organized any activities for students to assess their learning. It is usually assessed by teachers. Because I think primary school students are lack of assessment ability.

Teacher F: It is difficult for students to decide what to learn in class because the teacher has a lesson plan for each class. I used to let students choose activities before. For example, the teacher decided to play a game, but students were not very active, then I would provide several activities for them to choose.

Teachers generally believe that students' assessment ability is insufficient. It is difficult to let students decide what to learn in class because of the curriculum plan. Teachers are more worried about primary school students' self-consciousness. If the teacher lets the students choose what they want to learn and what kind of activities they want to do, the teacher will receive a lot of different answers. The class will become a mess, and it will be difficult for the class to continue. For this reason, many primary school teachers do not give students the choice. But some teachers also try to give students some options to choose from in some activities, so it's not so messy.

The following teachers mention that students are allowed to show their independent learning achievements and carry out group cooperation activities in class. It shows that teachers take students' autonomy and creativity into consideration when they assign homework. The form of homework is not bound by books and achieves the purpose of cultivating students' thinking. At the same time, it also shows that teachers pay attention to students' group learning ability in class, which can promote mutual learning between students.

Teacher C: The basic thing is to teach them learning skills in class so they know what to do when they're working alone. There is usually a presentation. Students are asked to prepare the display content of their own choice in advance. They can show recitation, short stories, extracurricular knowledge and so on. In order to accomplish this task, students will consciously study autonomously and learn more new knowledge.

Teacher D: I usually tell students why they should learn to study independently and suggest them study autonomously in their spare time. In class, I ask students to discuss problems in groups. After class, I will recommend some learning resources to students, such as picture books and micro-courses.

Teacher F: I will also encourage them to cooperate in group learning and learn from each other.

It can be seen that teachers' measures to promote learner autonomy mainly include "students-centered class", "group cooperative learning", "extracurricular knowledge development", "presentation" and "expression of the importance of learner autonomy". When teachers carry out classroom activities and assign homework, they think from the aspects of primary school students' ability range and their learning characteristics. Choosing learning content and evaluating learning are both difficult tasks for primary school students. But these abilities should be developed in primary schools so that students can make the right choice and conduct an effective evaluation in future study.

Teachers who chose "disagree" with Q30 (Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the Internet to promote learner autonomy) explain:

Teacher C: If students can reasonably use the Internet to learn, it can promote students' learning. But in my experience, most of primary school students have poor self-discipline, usually learning without the company of their parents, so they will be distracted when exposed to the Internet, which is not conducive to their learning.

Teacher E: Now the temptation of the Internet is very strong for students. Although there are many excellent learning resources on the Internet, students want to do something unrelated to study as soon as they get access to the Internet, because their self-discipline is very poor. So basically I don't give online homework.

This shows that teachers believe that even though the Internet has a positive effect on learning, they cannot trust students' use of the Internet for self-learning because of the lack of self-discipline, and they worry that students' learning efficiency would decline.

5. Conclusion

This part is a summary based on the findings and discussion of the above research. 1)Teachers generally hold positive beliefs about learner autonomy. Teachers' definition of learner autonomy mainly emphasizes ability, independence, attitude, responsibility, initiative and learning needs. Their understanding of the features of learner autonomy emphasizes learning methods, mastering the rhythm of learning, discovering and learning new knowledge. 2)Teachers have a clear belief about their role in learner autonomy. They believe that they are mainly guides and facilitators in the teaching process. 3)Teachers have a fair understanding of their students' autonomy and they generally believe that their students' autonomy is relatively lacking. 4)Teachers highly recognize the contribution of learner autonomy to students' language learning. Teachers emphasize that the contributions included the improvement of students' learning willingness, motivation, interest and concentration. 5)Teachers' ways to promote learner autonomy include strengthening students' awareness of autonomous learning, carrying out group cooperative learning activities, and carrying out student-centered classes. Based on this study, the authors believe that it is necessary to carry out seminars on teacher career development with the theme of promoting students' learner autonomy. Only by attaching importance to teachers' learner autonomy belief can they better cultivate students' learner autonomy.

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