CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

In the era of globalization, proficiency in foreign languages—particularly English—has become essential. In addition to being a language for international communication, English is a key tool for getting information, education, and job opportunities. Consequently, there has been a lot of interest in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). In this case, increasing the effectiveness of language acquisition requires autonomous learning.

When students can manage, organize, and assess their own learning without only depending on teacher guidance, this is referred to as autonomous learning. In order to achieve desired learning outcomes, people set their own learning goals, select suitable strategies, and integrate, control, and produce their behavior, cognition, and motivation. This process is known as self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002). A person's capacity to successfully and independently control their own learning is known as SRL (Self-regulated learning).

High levels of independent learning are associated with improved academic accomplishment, more effective learning practices, and increased motivation. Encouraging student autonomy boosts their intrinsic motivation. Students are more involved in their education and exhibit more perseverance in reaching their academic objectives when they are allowed to make significant academic decisions. Autonomy is one of the key elements in raising student learning motivation, according to the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which is supported by this study (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Autonomous learning has been included into language learning courses in many countries. However, there are still other challenges to overcome before this technique can be properly adopted in Indonesian EFL classes. Significant challenges to autonomous learning include restricted access to technology, a lack of institutional support, and teachers' roles in developing student freedom.

Self-regulated learning is important in EFL environments, according to recent studies. Benson (2011) highlighted that self-regulated learning allows students to make decisions on their own during the learning process, which helps them develop language skills more successfully. Additionally, Reinders and White (2016) found that supportive learning environments, technology availability, and intrinsic motivation all significantly contribute to the development of self-regulated learning behavior in EFL students. Therefore, it becomes crucial to comprehend and create methods to improve self-regulated learning if students want to become more proficient in English.

SRL is influenced by a number of elements, including learning strategies, academic and social support, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Deci's (2020) Self-Determination Theory (SDT), self-regulated learning is frequently driven primarily by intrinsic motivation, such as the desire to attain academic goals and enhance English language proficiency. Furthermore, Panadero (2017) highlighted that learning strategies—particularly metacognitive ones—are crucial for assisting students in organizing, tracking, and assessing their learning, all of which improve learning efficacy. Along with internal elements, external assistance also affects self-regulated learning. Alrashidi (2023) demonstrates how academic and social support, like peer interaction and lecturer guidance, can boost students' motivation and learning independence. Overall, a student's ability to learn on their own is greatly aided by the combination of intrinsic drive, the application of successful learning techniques, and sufficient academic and social support.

This study's other major issue is the degree of autonomous learning among EFL students, in addition to the affecting factors. Students' ability to take charge of their own education can be used to characterize the degree of autonomous learning, according to Little (2007). Despite having access to a wealth of learning tools, not all EFL students demonstrate high levels of autonomous learning, according to recent research like Lamb's (2017). In a study carried out in Indonesia, for instance, Suryani (2022) discovered that a considerable proportion of students still struggle with independent learning since they frequently depend on their teachers' direction and show little effort in creating their own learning strategies. Therefore, it is essential to assess the extent to which EFL students at Jambi University demonstrate autonomous learning behaviors.

There is a significant study gap that requires attention based on earlier studies. In EFL environments, the majority of research on autonomous learning has concentrated on the effects of learning strategies and motivation, ignoring other elements like the academic setting and availability of digital learning materials. Additionally, no particular study has assessed how autonomously Jambi University's EFL students learn. The objective of this research is to determine the variables that impact autonomous learning practices and evaluate the degree of autonomous learning among Jambi University EFL students. The researcher chooses the Jambi University English Language Education population as a study need in contrast to earlier studies that mostly concentrated on students from other universities or in different language education situations.

1.2 Limitations of The Research

This study is limited to eighth-semester students of the English Education Program at Jambi University, class of 2021. The scope of autonomous learning in this study specifically pertains to the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. The selection of eighth-semester students is based on the consideration that, at this stage, they have completed various courses relevant to English proficiency and have gained more experience in managing their own EFL learning. This makes them more likely to engage in and reflect on autonomous learning practices within the EFL context.

The study focuses on two main aspects related to autonomous EFL learning. First, it explores the factors that influence students' level of autonomy in EFL learning, identifying internal and external factors such as motivation, time management skills, and available resources. Second, it examines the autonomous learning behaviors exhibited by the students in the EFL context, analyzing the strategies they use, how they select learning materials, and how they evaluate their progress in learning English.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the background that has been stated, the formulations of the problem taken in this study are as follows:

1. What factors do EFL students at Jambi University perceive as influencing their autonomous learning behaviors?

2. What is the level of autonomous learning behavior among EFL students at Jambi University?

1.4 Research Purposes

Based on the research questions above, the purposes of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate the factors that EFL students at Jambi University perceive as influencing their autonomous learning behaviors.
2. To assess the level of autonomous learning behavior among EFL students at Jambi University.

1.6 Significances of The Research

This research has held significant theoretical and practical implications for the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Theoretically, it has contributed to the existing body of knowledge on autonomous learning by identifying the key factors that influence self-directed learning among EFL students. Understanding these factors has provided valuable insights into the psychological, cognitive, and environmental determinants that shape students' learning behaviors. Furthermore, this study has enriched the discourse on learner autonomy by contextualizing its relevance within an Indonesian higher education setting, specifically at Jambi University.

Practically, the findings of this research have served as a reference for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers in developing instructional strategies that foster autonomous learning. By assessing the level of autonomous learning behaviors among EFL students, this study has provided empirical data that can be utilized to improve teaching methodologies, design more effective learning materials, and enhance student engagement in self-regulated learning. Additionally, the study's recommendations have guided the development of institutional policies that support learner autonomy, ultimately improving students' academic performance and language proficiency. In a broader context, the research also has addressed the growing demand for independent and lifelong learning skills, which are essential in the digital age and globalized educational landscape. By highlighting the importance of autonomy in EFL

learning, this study has contributed to the advancement of learner-centered pedagogical practices that empower students to take charge of their educational journeys.