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The Correlations between Learner Autonomy and the Affective Factors in College English Learning in China

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Abstract
Cultivation of EFL learners' autonomous learning ability has been set as one of the main goals of College English teaching by the Ministry of Education In China. However, learners' affective factors have been argued to make the process of cultivating autonomous learning ability complicated. Thus, this study aims to explore the detailed information on the correlations between learner autonomy and learners affective factors. In order to obtain reliable data, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are employed in the study. The research results showed that 1) the students with high motivation are more skillful at selecting and implementing learning strategies; 2) learners' ability of monitoring their learning process has highest level of correlation with all of the three kinds of English learning anxiety, and the learners' attitude toward learner autonomy shows the lowest coefficient with the English learning anxiety. 3) In the correlation between self-efficacy and learner autonomy, the highest level of correlation is between self-efficacy in learning ability and learners' attitude toward learner autonomy, which means students with high self-efficacy in learning ability are more likely to have positive attitude toward autonomous learning. They are more willingly taking charge of their own learning activities. Based on the research findings, some teaching strategies are proposed aiming to utilize the positive roles of students' affective factors in EFL teaching and control the negative ones.

Keywords: Learner Autonomy, Learning Motivation, Anxiety, Self-Efficacy.

1. Introduction

Traditional language teaching methods focus on transferring knowledge from teachers to students, which surely constrain students' learning enthusiasm and autonomous learning ability as it is the teacher who decides what to learn and how to learn, and what students may do is to receive passively. With the development of social science and teaching technology, more and more teachers and researchers (e.g. Holec, 1981; Dickinson, 1987; Boud, 1988; Littlewood, 1999, etc.) realized that it is one of the prominent issues for educators to the cultivate students' autonomous learning ability in ESL/ EFL teaching. Chinese Ministry of Education issued College English Curriculum Requirements in 2007, in which students' autonomous learning awareness and ability is emphasized. Many researchers in China (e.g. Wen, 1995; Wang, 2002; Wei, 2002; Pang, 2003, etc.) have already done a lot of studies on

the topic of learner autonomy since 1990s. However, the implementation of learner autonomy in China encountered many kinds of obstacles including the learners' intrinsic factors and extrinsic ones. It leads to unsatisfactory results in the present situation of students' autonomous learning ability. Xu, Peng, and Wu (2004) did a survey among 1,340 non-English major college students in China, and found that the overall level of autonomous learning ability of Chinese students were still low. That is to say, it still has great significance to do research on how to improve students' autonomous learning ability in China.

Cultivation of learners' autonomous learning ability in EFL teaching involves many individual factors such as personality, motivation, learning strategies, anxiety, self-efficiency, etc. The affective factors may radically affect the process of learner autonomy cultivation. As motivation is one of the most important concepts in psychology and language education, which is commonly used to explain learners' success and failure in learning (Dörnyei, 2009), it is cannot be neglected in the correlation research. Dörnyei & Csizer (2002) also suggest that relating motivational factors should be combined with learning behavior in the research. Spratt et al. (2002) conducted an investigation to explore the relation between learner autonomy and learning motivation and they found that motivation appeared to precede autonomy and low motivation discouraged the pursuit of autonomous activities. Cotterall (1999) assert that learning motivation contributes to the development of learner autonomy by exploring self-efficacy.

And it is also proven by some Chinese researchers that there exist significant correlations between learner autonomy and affective factors in EFL learning. Xu et al. (2004) claims that learner autonomy is influenced by learning motivation, which provides motive and direction for autonomous learning.

In viewing the previous study on the correlation between LA and the affective factors, it is found that most of the studies are conducted in the second language acquisition settings but not in the foreign language learning situation. In second language acquisition setting, learners directly exposed to or frequently interact with the target language, but in foreign language learning context, the target language is taught in school as an academic subject and there is a great proportion of the variance in language attainments (Dörnyei, 1994). Therefore, the motivation types, situations provoking anxiety, the level self-efficacy may vary a lot due to the different learning situation, different culture, environment that the learners grow up, different education system.

Moreover, due to the traditional teaching concept in China, the Chinese style textbook, the tight teaching schedule and the large class size, students' feeling generally are neglected in the whole process of language teaching and learning. Though in China, there are some researchers such as Xu & Zhan, 2004; Ni, 2010; Chen & Chen, 2007, Yue & Shi, 2009, among others have done studies on the correlations between leaner autonomy and the affective factors, but the research results are very superficial. No detailed information can be obtained from these researches, such as how the affective factors effect each aspects of autonomous learning ability, which aspects of the affective factors affect learners' autonomous learning ability more. Thus, the present research is conducted to find out the detailed information on the correlations between learner autonomy and learners' affective factors. The research results may have great significance in providing breakthrough points for the investigation of the effective teaching strategies to enhance students' autonomous learning ability in China.

2. Theoretical-Conceptual Framework

Autonomous learning ability contributes to effective language learning, which gives it a special position in the field of foreign language teaching. However, learner autonomy is affected by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors of the learner (e.g. learning motivation, learning anxiety, learning strategies, learning style, and learning environment, etc.). The main concern of the present study is to explore the correlations between learner autonomy and learners' affective factors, aiming to find the breakthrough point for the effective EFL

teaching strategies. The present research is conducted based on the theoretical-conceptual framework shown in Figure 1. The researcher designed this framework in order to demonstrate which theories are adopted, and what roles they play in the present study. Figure 1 indicates that the theories and concepts on learner autonomy, language learning motivation, language learning anxiety, and learning self-efficacy are used in this research. They affect one another under the frame of language learning. Moreover, students' anxious feelings, motivation types and confident feelings shine effects on students' autonomous learning ability, and at the same time, these affective factors also have close interrelations with each other. The research aims to provide theoretical base for teaching strategies on enhancing non-English majors' EFL autonomous learning ability.

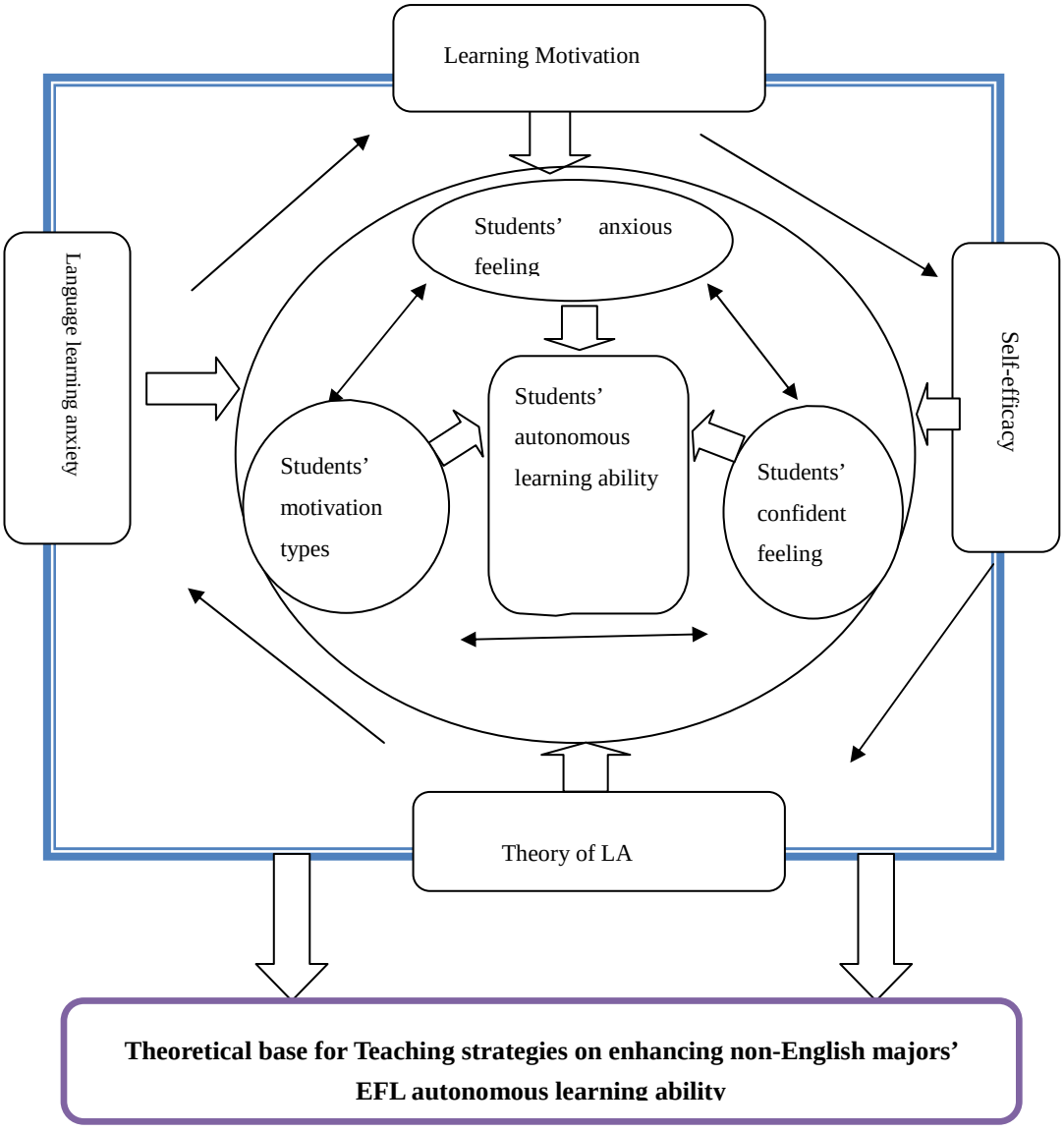

Figure 1: Theoretical-conceptual framework of the present study

3. Purpose of the Research

The survey research is designed for investigating the correlations between learner autonomy and the learners' affective factors---such as learning motivation, anxiety, and self-efficiency. The research findings will provide some theoretical evidence for the investigation of the teaching strategies for enhancing students' autonomous learning ability. This research seeks answers to the following questions:

1) Which subtype of EFL learning motivation effects students' autonomous learning ability most among Chinese university students?
2) Among the six dimensions of learner autonomy, which dimension is easily been affected by students' affective factors?

4. Research Method

The subjects of this study are the second-year non-English majors in Linyi University. The reasons for choosing sophomores as the subjects of this research are as follows: the sophomores have already taken compulsory autonomous English learning course for 2 semesters, (2 classes per week); therefore, they have already formed relatively stable English learning habits. 392 sophomores took part in the questionnaire survey, dropping 13 cases due to missing data with a total sample of 379 subjects. They major in Business Administration, law and Engineering. English is one of their compulsory subjects. 93 of them also took part in the open-ended question survey.

In order to obtain reliable data, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are employed in the study. A questionnaire is administered to collect quantitative data. Open-ended questions survey is to collect qualitative data, which are used as the supplement of the research findings. Considering that the existing questionnaires in these fields have already been proved to be effective, there is no necessary for us to design new questionnaires. Therefore, the researcher decides to adopt the existing questionnaires as our research instruments. The whole questionnaire is composed of five parts: 1) personal profiles of the subjects; 2) Learner Autonomy Questionnaire (Xu & Zhan, 2004); 3) English Learning Motivation Scale (Gao, et al., 2003); 4) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS) (Howitz et al., 1986); and 5) Learners' Self-efficacy Scale (Zhu, 2012). All these questionnaires are originally designed in Chinese except FLCAS. To make the subjects have a full understanding of each item, the Chinese versions were adopted. The Chinese version of FLCAS was quoted from Cao (2011). The questionnaire survey was administered in June 2013. In order to make sure the participants responded to the questionnaire items conscientiously, normal English class time was used with the permission of their English teacher and agreement of the participants. The students answered the questionnaire anonymously because it would make the subjects feel that their responses might be affected if they were asked to write down their names. It took students 20-25 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The subjects finished answering the questionnaires independently without any negotiation with each other. In total, 392 questionnaire sheets were distributed. After the questionnaire sheets were returned, each of the questionnaire sheets was examined by the researcher to make sure that it was properly answered. The questionnaire sheets from students who failed to complete all the items were considered invalid and abandoned, resulting in total of 379 questionnaires for further analysis. The response rate was 96%. After the administration and collection of the questionnaire sheets, the data were entered into computer. SPSS 11.5 and LISERL 8.51 were used to obtain descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients and to conduct factor analysis, independent-samples t-test and path analysis.

The open-ended questions were all designed in Chinese and the survey was conducted the same time with the questionnaire survey in June 2013. 93 subjects were chosen randomly to answer the open-ended questions. Considering the students' level in English writing, they were allowed to answer the questions in Chinese.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Correlations between LA and EFL Learning Motivation

Table 1: Correlations between LA and ELM (note1)

		ELM
LA1	Pearson Correlation	0.220(**)
LA2	Pearson Correlation	0.318(**)
LA3	Pearson Correlation	0.376(**)
LA4	Pearson Correlation	0.388(**)
LA5	Pearson Correlation	0.386(**)
LA6	Pearson Correlation	0.361(**)
LA	Pearson Correlation	0.486(**)

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

Table 1 indicates that learner autonomy is significantly correlated with students' English learning motivation (r=0.486). This result is also in conformity with the previous researches; for example, Deci and Ryan (1985) state that it is autonomy that leads to motivation. And, Xu and Zhan (2004) hold the view that learning motivation can help to promote learner autonomy. The relation between learner autonomy and motivation proves that the stronger motivation the EFL learners have, the better performance they will have in autonomous learning, and vice versa.

Table1 also shows that students' ability of selecting and implementing learning strategies has the closest correlation with English learning motivation (r=0.388), which indicates that the students with high motivation are more skillful at selecting and using learning strategies. And they are more conscious on monitoring the use of learning strategies in the process of language learning than those with lower motivation level.

Among the seven subtypes of EFL learning motivation, the intrinsic interest motivation has the closest correlation with EFL Learner Autonomy (r=0.556) (See Table 2), which suggests that learners who have more interest in the English language itself, the people and culture of the English speaking countries are more active and capable in arranging their English autonomous learning. Ushioda (1996) claims that intrinsic motivation has a number of positive features and one of which is an expression of the personal control and autonomy in the learning process. Students who have an intrinsic interest in English are so eager to learn it well that they will from time to time evaluate their learning methods, find any possible opportunity to practice their English, and so on. To them, English learning is a process of enjoyment, a process that is charming and interesting.

On the contrary, those who are not interested in English will usually find it boring and tiring to learn it. This is also proven by the students' answer to the open-ended questions. To Question 1, Do you like learning English? Why? One Student's answer is as follow: "*I don't like English. I don't have any interest in it. No other special reason. I have a headache*

note1: ELM=English Learning Motivation; LA= learner autonomy; LA1: attitudes towards LA; LA2: identifying teaching objectives; LA3:formulating learning objectives; LA4: selecting and implementing learning strategies; LA5： monitoring and assessing the use of learning strategies

whenever I see English. But I have to learn it because it is a compulsory subject. So I force myself to learn it, but the more I force myself, the more I dislike it." If a student feels "dislike" learning English, how could he/she be willingly to learn it after class. The lower ability in autonomous learning will be the consequent result.

Table 2: Correlations between LA and 7 Subtypes of Motivation (note2)

		LA
IIM	Pearson Correlation	0.556(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
IAM	Pearson Correlation	-0.062
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.215
LSM	Pearson Correlation	0.148(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003
GAM	Pearson Correlation	0.357(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
SRM	Pearson Correlation	0.394(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
IDM	Pearson Correlation	0.320(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
IMM	Pearson Correlation	0.355(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 shows that the correlation between EFL Learner Autonomy and Immediate Achievement Motivation does not reach the significant level. This result is beyond our expectations. In designing this research, it is supposed that immediate achievement should have very close correlation with learner autonomy, as in China, the education is still examination-oriented. Since the students enter primary school until they graduate from senior high school, most of them are studying for passing certain examinations.

The reasons for this surprising result may as follows：firstly, the Chinese students are accustomed to examination-oriented education as Chinese education is still examination-oriented. However, this is only the case before the students enter universities. After they enter universities, examinations become less important than before if they do not want to take postgraduate course in the future. Even some of them want to continue their study after they get the bachelor degree; it is still the case four years later. As the subjects are all sophomores, taking examination for master course is still far from now. Thus, their motivation for passing examination is still out of consideration. Although passing CET-4 is one of the basic requirement for them to get their bachelor degree, they do not feel nervous for it because CET-4 is conducted twice a year, they do not need to feel any pressure whether

note2: IIM= intrinsic interest motivation, IAM=immediate achievement motivation, LSM=learning situation motivation, GAM= going abroad motivation, SRM= social responsibility motivation, IDM= individual development motivation, IMM= information medium motivation.

they can pass it now, as they still have many chances before their graduation.

Secondly, the reason may also lie in the new College English Curriculum Requirements. The Ministry of Education (2007) has issued a new series of College English Curriculum Requirements which have set different objectives for non-English majors. One of the objectives of College English teaching is to enhance students' ability to study independently and improve their comprehensive cultural quality so as to meet the needs of social development and international exchanges in China. As it can be seen, in the new curriculum, the importance of traditional examination is reduced. The focus is moved to cultivate students' skill of study. This result suggests that tests or examinations are no longer the effective stimulus for EFL autonomous learning in the University. Teachers should not rely too much on exams to enhance their students' learning motivation.

To sum up, the research results indicates that among the seven subtypes of EFL learning motivation, the correlation between immediate achievement motivation and learner autonomy does not reach the significant level. The other six types of EFL learning motivation are all positively correlated with learner autonomy, among which the intrinsic interest has the highest level of correlation with learner autonomy. Learner Autonomy is positively correlated with the overall EFL learning motivation. As most subtypes of EFL learning motivation show positive correlations with learner autonomy, it is still very necessary for teachers to stimulate students' EFL learning motivation so that their autonomous leaning ability can be cultivated.

5.2 The Correlations between LA and EFL Learning Anxiety

Table 3 indicates that communication apprehension negatively correlated with learner autonomy (r=-0.438). That is to say, the higher level of communication apprehension throw a negative effect on the ability of autonomous learning ability, especially on the ability of monitoring the learning process, as the correlation between learners' ability of monitoring their learning process and communication apprehension is the highest one (r=-0.478) among the six. The students with higher level of communication apprehension generally fail to monitor the learning process. At the same time, the students who fail to monitor their learning process will show higher communication apprehension.

On the contrary, communication apprehension shows less effect on the students' attitudes toward learner autonomy; as the correlation coefficient between learners' attitude toward LA and communication apprehension is only -0.060, which is largely lower than the other five. That is to say, whether the students feel nervous in their communication in English will not affect their attitude toward autonomous learning.

All in all, in cultivating students' autonomous learning ability, teachers should find effective measures to reduce their communication apprehension. In the other way round, if the students' ability of monitoring learning process is improved, their communication apprehension level will consequently be reduced largely.

Table 3 also shows that test anxiety negatively correlates with learner autonomy (r=-0.473 significant at 0.01 level). That is to say, students with higher level of test anxiety will have lower ability in autonomous learning. It is also found that the correlation between learner autonomy and test anxiety is higher than that between learner autonomy and communication apprehension. That is to say, test anxiety affect more on learner autonomy than communication apprehension.

In a close-up view of the correlations between learner autonomy and test anxiety, the researcher found that the highest level of correlation among the six dimensions of learner autonomy is still related with learners' ability to monitor their learning process in autonomous learning (r=-0.400). And furthermore, the lowest one is with the learners' attitude toward learner autonomy (=-0.180). That is to say, the students with higher level of test anxiety have stronger effect on their ability of monitoring their learning process. Or it could be thought that because the students fail to monitor their learning process, they have no confidence on what

they have already learned and feel nervous and unsettled about the tests. Here, the researcher does not intend to discuss which the cause is and which the result is. What the researcher tries to find out is whether they affected each other and to what level they affect each other.

And at the same time, fear of negative evaluation has the closest relation with learners' ability of monitoring their learning process among the six dimensions (r=-0.424) (see Table 3). It means that the students who are more skillful at monitoring their learning process have low level of fear of negative evaluation.

Table 3: Correlations between the Six Dimensions of LA and CA (note3)

		CA	TA	FNE
LA	Pearson Correlation	-0.438(**)	-0.473(**)	-0.413(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
LA1	Pearson Correlation	-0.060	-0.180(**)	-0.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.446	0.001	0.092
LA2	Pearson Correlation	-0.294(**)	-0.335(**)	-0.264(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
LA3	Pearson Correlation	-0.368(**)	-0.395(**)	-0.346(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
LA4	Pearson Correlation	-0.386(**)	-0.387(**)	-0.370(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
LA5	Pearson Correlation	-0.340(**)	-0.345(**)	-0.317(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
LA6	Pearson Correlation	-0.478(**)	-0.400(**)	-0.424(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000

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

To sum up, learner autonomy has negative correlation with EFL anxiety. Among the six dimensions of learner autonomy, learners' ability of monitoring their learning process has highest correlation level with all of the three kinds of English learning anxiety, and the learners' attitude toward learner autonomy shows the lowest coefficient with the English learning anxiety. The results suggest that English learning anxiety throw much more effect on the EFL learners' actual learning performance in autonomous learning, but has little effect on spiritual aspect, such as awareness and attitude.

5.3 The Correlations between LA and Learning Self-Efficacy

Table 4 shows that learner autonomy is positively correlated with self-efficacy in learning ability (r=0.447, significant at 0.01 level). This result means that the higher level of self-efficacy in learning ability the students are at, the higher ability the students will present in autonomous learning.

Moreover, Table 4 also presents detailed information about the Pearson correlation coefficient

note3: CA=Communication Apprehension, TA=Test Anxiety, FNE= Fear of Negative Evaluation

between self-efficacy in learning ability and the six dimensions of learner autonomy. The correlation coefficient is between 0.355 and 0.248, among which the highest level of correlation is between Self-efficacy in learning ability and learners' attitude toward learner autonomy (r=0.355, at the significant level of 0.01), which means that students with high self-efficacy in learning ability are more likely to have positive attitude toward autonomous learning. They are more willingly taking charge of their own learning activities. The second high correlation is between learners' ability of formulating learning objectives and self-efficacy in learning ability, which means that higher level of self-efficacy in learning ability will help student to set proper learning goals and choose some challenging learning tasks.

Table 4: Correlations between LA and SELA

		SELB	SELA
LA	Pearson Correlation	0.390(**)	0.447(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
LA1	Pearson Correlation	0.291(**)	0.355(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
LA2	Pearson Correlation	0.275(**)	0.275(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
LA3	Pearson Correlation	0.296(**)	0.311(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
LA4	Pearson Correlation	0.252(**)	0.248(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
LA5	Pearson Correlation	0.240(**)	0.273(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
LA6	Pearson Correlation	0.265(**)	0.299(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
SELA=Self-efficacy in learning ability; SELB=Self-efficacy in Learning Behavior

Table4 demonstrates the detailed information about the Pearson correlation coefficient between Self-efficacy in learning behavior and the six dimensions of learner autonomy. The correlation coefficient is from 0.240 to 0.296, among which the correlation between LA3 (ability of formulating learning objectives) and SELB (Self-efficacy in learning behavior) is the highest (r=0.296). That is to say, the students who possess high level of self-efficacy in learning behavior are more likely to formulate suitable learning objectives. However, it should be admitted that the correlation coefficients between the six dimensions of LA and SELB are all below moderate level, thus, the effect of SELB on the autonomous learning is not strong.

To sum up, learners' self-efficacy beliefs have positive correlation with their autonomous learning ability. They influence the choices students make and courses of action they pursue. Self-efficacy in English learning will help students determine how much effort they will expend on English learning activities, how long they will persevere when confronting difficulties, and how resilient when facing with the adversities. The higher level the self-efficacy is, the greater the effort and resilience will be. Thus, improving students' self-efficacy beliefs is one of the factors that should be taken into consideration in enhancing their learner autonomy in English learning.

5.4 Path Analysis

In order to check the interrelation among EFL learning motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy; and show the clear picture on the correlation between learner autonomy and these affective factors, the researcher conducted path analysis. Table 5 demonstrates the correlations among EFL learning motivation, anxiety and self-efficacy. EFL learning anxiety has negative linear correlations with English learning motivation and self-efficacy belief. The correlation coefficients are –0.05 and –0.15 as the significant level is at 0.01 and 0.02, the linear correlations between English learning anxiety and self-efficacy is significant. Although the correlation level is not high, it still cannot be neglected. The correlation coefficient between English learning motivation and self-efficacy is 0.12 (significant at 0.02 level). That is to say there exists significant correlation between English learning motivation and self-efficacy belief.

Table 5: Square Matrices of ELM, EFLCA and SE

		ELM	SE
EFLCA	Beta	-0.05	-0.15
	sig.	(0.01)	(0.02)
	t-value	-3.74*	-6.92*
SE	Beta	0.12	
	sig.	(0.02)	
	t-value	6.85*	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level
ELM =English learning motivation; EFLCA =EFL classroom anxiety; SE= self-efficacy

As EFL learning motivation positively correlates with self-efficacy belief, in college English learning process, high level of self-efficacy belief will certainly improve students' EFL learning motivation. At the same time, the strong learning motivation will result in further enhancement in students' self-efficacy level. Thus to set this kind of virtuous circle in students' English learning process is very important. Moreover, foreign language learning motivation and self-efficacy are also tightly related with foreign language learning anxiety. If the learners could effectively relieve their learning anxiety, their self-efficacy will be enhanced; in the meantime, their learning motivation will be strengthened. Strong learning motivation and self-efficacy beliefs can also reduce the level of learning anxiety.

Table 6 indicates that correlations between learner autonomy and English learning motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy pass the T-test, and all of the correlation coefficients reach the significant level. That is to say, learner autonomy significantly correlates with English

learning motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy belief, among which the correlations between learner autonomy and EFL learning motivation and self-efficacy belief are positive, and the correlation between learner autonomy and EFL learning anxiety is negative.

Table 6: Correlations between LA and ELM, EFLCA and SE

		ELM	EFLA	SE
LA	Beta	0.33	-0.29	0.12
	sig.	0.04	0.03	0.03
	t-value	8.17*	-8.47*	4.16*

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level
ELM = English learning motivation ; EFLCA= EFL classroom anxiety; SE= self-efficacy belief.

Figure 2 provides clearer picture about the interrelations among learner autonomy and English learning motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy belief. From Figure 2 the following information can be obtained: 1) learners' English learning motivation (ELM) negatively affects EFL learning anxiety and positively affects self-efficacy; 2) EFL learning anxiety negatively influences learning motivation and self-efficacy belief; 3) self-efficacy belief shows positive effect on learning motivation and negative one on learning anxiety; 4) all these three variables---learning motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy have impact on the level of learner autonomy. While the learning motivation and self-efficacy show positive influence on learner autonomy, learning anxiety shows the negative one. Thus, in training students' autonomous learning ability, teachers should not ignore students' affective factors, such as learning motivation, anxiety and self-efficacy beliefs.

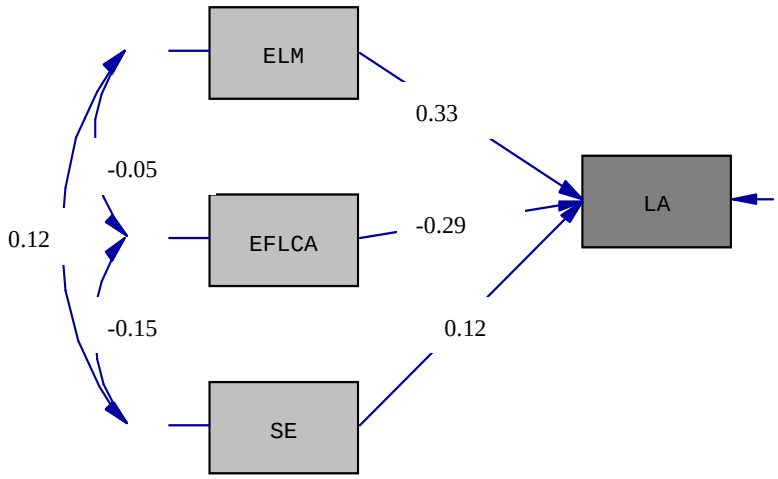

Figure 2: Correlations between LA and ELM, EFLCA and SE

6. Pedagogical Implications

As learners' affective factors, such as learning motivation, learning anxiety, and self-efficacy beliefs, play important roles on language learners' autonomous learning ability, it is very necessary for teachers take these factors into considerations in language teaching. In this section, some suggestions are put forward aiming to utilize the positive roles of students' affective factors in EFL teaching and control the negative ones.

6.1 Proper Use of Cooperative Learning

Learner autonomy is by no means eradicating collaboration (Littlewood, 1999); it presupposes interdependence (Little, 1991). Cooperative learning is a social activity that is complementary to independent learning. In the open-ended questionnaire survey, to Question 6--- "What do you think is the most serious obstacle that students face in their English autonomous learning at present?", more than half of the students answered that they have poor self-control ability, and they could not control themselves from thinking of other things while studying English autonomously. This shows that students are not competent at monitoring their learning process, so their attention shifted easily to other things. In the correlation research, the researcher found that learners' ability of monitoring learning process has closest correlation with language learning anxiety. Thus, the researcher suggests using cooperative learning activity. That is because compared with traditional ask-and-answer teaching style in China, cooperative learning provides more relaxing learning environment in which learners' language learning anxiety is reduced. The discussion is carried out in a small group, and students will be not afraid of losing face in public.

Furthermore, cooperative learning can also enhance students' learning motivation. In China, most of students are characterized as passive, dependent, and lacking enthusiasm in language learning. That may caused by the traditional teaching method. Teachers are so busy in explaining the language points to students that they have no time to care about students' feeling. In the limit class time, the ask-and-answer teaching activities may not involve everyone. If the students cannot get the chance to answer the questions for several times, their motivation would be reduced consequently. Once they lose their motivation, they will consider language learning is only a task. Enthusiasm and interests will disappear day by day.
On the contrary, cooperative learning activities provide students opportunities to use the language. Each of the group members can speak out his/her thought and talks freely. Each of them can get the chance to learn from others. In order to show the better side to the group member, and get good evaluation from the group member, the student will make preparations before class. Thus, cooperative learning provides learners a small environment in which learner can plan what they are going to do in a certain time according to their own reasons, and implement the goals step by step with their partners or individually during which they continually assess the results and the learning methods, and they also adjust their learning methods if necessary. All these will be helpful to stimulate their language learning motivation.
In effective cooperative learning class, teachers should no longer regard themselves as the authority and the transmitter of textbooks by reading the textbook and explaining the language points. Teachers should give students time, space and right to think by themselves. In cooperative learning, what the teacher should do is to motivate and encourage the students to learn through various activities.

It is also very important for the teacher to assign specific roles to the cooperative group members. After the formation of cooperative groups, the teacher should give specific role in each group in order to ensure the task being conducted appropriately. The roles may like follows: the organizer, the secretary, the presenters, and participators. The teacher can choose the student who is good at organizing and communicating as the organizer. He/She takes charge of the group work and assures the activity going smoothly and working together to their goals and achievement. He/she must promote the members to participate actively and make sure no one is left out. The organizer will monitor the performance of group members and make some adjustment. He/she is an organizer and also a participator. The teacher can choose someone with good writing abilities to be a secretary in a group. The secretary notes down the main points of each speaker in the group during the discussion. If necessary, he/she should write a report in broad outline which will be given to the presenters. As for the presenters, the teacher can choose the students who have active characteristics and strong desire to show their oral abilities. Their responsibility is to present the group's working result to the whole class. The rest of the students in the group can be the participators who take part in the learning activities. The roles assigned to the students can be changed according to different situations or their performance. The reasonable distribution of students' roles can ensure the cooperative group runs smoothly and effectively, and prevent students from

daydreaming and chatting under the shelter of cooperative learning.

However, in organizing cooperative activities, teachers should be careful in building a sense of positive interdependence among the group members. In face-to-face interactions, students are aware of each other's strengths and weaknesses and can slowly build a support network within the class. By doing so students can go forward more independently through interdependence, and meanwhile their learning anxiety will be reduced and learning motivation, self-efficacy will gradually be improved.

6.2 Setting up Achievable Learning Objective

Setting up practical and achievable learning goal can make students obtain self-efficacy belief, as goal achieving is an important source of self-efficacy. When people believe that it is possible and important to achieve the goal, their self-efficacy will be enhanced, the commitment to the goal will be improved, too (Locke & Latham, 1990). Moreover, their learning motivation will be enhanced consequently. On the contrary, improper and ambiguous learning objectives will hinder the learning progress, and rob the self-confidence in language learning. it is also been proved by the students' answer to the open-ended questionnaire. To Question 5---"What kind of person seems to be more confident in your impression? If you feel rather confident in English learning, please tell me in what aspects you show very confident?", some students said "*…When I can fulfill the task that teacher assigned to us, I feel that I'm full confidence, and I like to speak English, but if the task is too difficult to do, I will feel lost and don't know what to do…"*

In fact, it is a real trouble for undergraduates to set appropriate learning goals for themselves. The researcher suggests that to set proper and achievable autonomous language learning objectives, autonomous learners should pay attention to the following points:

1) The achievable learning objectives should be based on learners' own needs. Thus, before setting learning objectives, learners should first think over about one question: why I want to learn English? In answering this question students may find their real goal of learning. Only if their learning objective are set based their own needs, can it become a kind of driving force and motivate learner's persistent effort.

2) Proper learning objectives should be explicit and concrete. Compared with vague and general learning objectives, the explicit and concrete ones are more helpful to motivate students to study hard, conduct self-monitor, self-adjustment, and self-assessment. For example,

a) I will practice my reading skills.

b) Everyday, I will read a passage (about 100 words) for ten minutes. And remember two sentences in the passage.

The objective in a) is too general to be achieved, as reading skills cover two dimension: fast reading skills and intensive reading skills, and in each of the dimension there are still a lot of skills---such as scanning skill, skimming skill, eye movement skill, and so on. It will take years to achieve this learning objective, and the student is easily to get lost on the way of practicing. On the contrary, the objective in b) is explicit and concrete, so that the student know what he/she should do and it is easy to make an assessment on the learning result. Compared with the objective in a), the one in b) is easier to realize, and make the student see his/her progress and success. As a result, the continuous and active study will be motivated.

3) Short-term objectives are preferred. In comparison with long-term goal, short-term goal is easier to be achieved, and let students experience the happiness of success more quickly, and make their self-efficacy become stronger and stronger. Weekly or monthly learning objectives are better than yearly or semester objectives. For example,

c) To learn 50 new words within one week

d) To read 10 articles in a semester and write down the new words in these articles.
The objective in c) is better than the one in d). That is because the student with c) objective can be rewarded weekly. And he/she will taste the sweetness of success in short time. After students succeed in achieving the learning objective within the given time, they will be more self-confident in their learning ability---that is to say, their self-efficacy will be enhanced consequently. However, the students with d) objective may feel burden on the way to achieve the goal due to the shortage of timely rewarding.

Therefore, it is essential for teachers to help and encourage their students to set up practical and achievable English learning goals based on students' individual characteristics.

7. Conclusions

This study was an attempt to investigate detailed information on the correlations between learner autonomy and learners' affective factors, and the interrelations among language learning motivation, language learning anxiety and learners' self-efficacy beliefs. By performing Pearson correlation analysis and path analysis, the we got the correlation coefficients between learner autonomy and language learning motivation, anxiety and self-efficacy, and we also got the Square Matrices of the correlations among EFL learning motivation, anxiety and self-efficacy. The results showed that there exist significant interrelations among English learning motivation, learning anxiety, and self-efficacy beliefs. The correlation between EFL learning motivation and self-efficacy beliefs is positive, while the correlation between English learning anxiety and learning motivation and self-efficacy is negative. Moreover, the correlations between learner autonomy and English learning motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy pass the T-test, and all of the correlation coefficients reach the significant level. The correlations between learner autonomy and EFL learning motivation and self-efficacy belief are positive, and the correlation between learner autonomy and EFL learning anxiety is negative.

The detailed information is as follows:

1) The students with high motivation are more skillful at selecting and implementing language learning strategies, and in the learning process they are more conscious in monitoring and assessing the learning strategies than those with lower motivation level. Moreover, among the seven subtypes of learning motivation, the immediate achievement motivation cannot stimulate students' autonomous learning.

2) Among the six dimensions of learner autonomy, learners' ability of monitoring their learning process has highest level of correlation with all of the three kinds of English learning anxiety, and the learners' attitude toward learner autonomy shows the lowest coefficient with the English learning anxiety. That is to say, students with high level of language learning anxiety are more likely to fail to monitor their autonomous learning process.

3) In the correlation between self-efficacy and learner autonomy, the highest level of correlation is between self-efficacy in learning ability and learners' attitude toward learner autonomy, which means students with high self-efficacy in learning ability are more likely to have positive attitude toward autonomous learning. They are more willingly taking charge of their own learning activities.

Based on the research findings, the researcher provides some suggestions for improving EFL learners autonomous learning abilities, such as using cooperative learning activities properly and setting up achievable learning objectives. It is hoped that the findings and suggestions of this research can broaden the practical understanding of the correlations between learner autonomy and learners' individual affective factors in EFL learning.

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