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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of Autonomous Tasks on Grammar Achievement among EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT - This study was conducted to see the effect of autonomous tasks on EFL learner's grammar achievement. Sixty undergraduate students of English Translation at Azad University of Hamadan were chosen through the PET test, and two matched groups, one as the experimental group and the other as the control group, were formed. These learners were tested through a pre-test to check their accuracy level regarding the conditional sentences. Then, the experimental group was given some tasks about the structures, while the control group did not have any treatment. They had their routine exercises in the advanced writing course, in which the teacher gave them a topic to write a paragraph on, and then every grammatical point in that text was explained explicitly by the teacher. After three treatment sessions in the experimental group, the two groups (control and experimental) were tested through a post-test. The learners' scores demonstrated that the experimental group outperformed the control group regarding grammar achievement. The analysis of the data was done through a t-test. It was concluded that autonomous tasks have significantly impacted EFL learners' grammar achievement.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA) Review has recently dedicated a special issue to learner autonomy in second language (L2) learning, demonstrating the validity and benefit of autonomous learning environments (Dam, 2001). Learner autonomy is conceptualised not as simply setting learners to tasks such as interactive computer tasks or as declaring the instructor obsolete but as a pedagogical ideology in favour of teaching that ultimately turns control of the task of learning over to learners so that they become empowered to engage in learning independently (Benson & Voller, 1997). The benefits of learner autonomy have been recognised in the field of L2 writing as well. Based on her experience as a teacher and researcher in L2 writing, Ferris (2002) recommends that L2 writing learners "be aware of their error patterns" (p. 87).

Generally, teachers and researchers recognise that part of the role of instruction is to promote beneficial language learning habits. For instance, Lightbown and Spada (2021) reviewed SLA research that shows that a critical aspect of classroom language teaching is helping learners notice form in the L2 through various techniques that direct learners to pay attention to form while communicating in the L2. Such instruction allows learners to become more accurate regarding the form in focus and promotes a language learning skill they can carry with them beyond the present instructional situation. Encouraging learner autonomy is increasingly recognised as a beneficial practice to promote language learning. Therefore, it is necessary to explore language learning tasks that encourage learner autonomy and increase accuracy in the second language.

However, a good teacher may be, students will never learn a language –or anything else- unless they aim to learn outside and during class time. Language is too complex and varied for there to be enough time for students to learn all they need to in a classroom. Even if students have three English lessons a week, it will take a significant number of weeks before they have had the kind of exposure and opportunities for use necessary for real progress. As Nunan (1988) suggested, not everything can be taught in class, but even if it could, a teacher will not always be around if and when students wish to use the language in real life.

To compensate for the limits of classroom time and counter the passivity that is an enemy of learning, students need to develop their learning strategies to become autonomous learners. The development only sometimes happens automatically. Attitudes to self-directed learning are frequently conditioned by the educational culture where the learning occurs. The common phenomenon among learners is the passive role they assume in learning. They rely on teachers too much and are reluctant to develop a sense of responsibility for the outcome of their learning. Many EFL teachers have experienced the frustration of investing endless energy in designing exciting tasks and organising various activities for students. However, they often received little response. Learners are usually reluctant to use the target language in pair/small group work. Students do not reflect on their mistakes and do not learn from them. Even highly motivated learners do not always seem to attain their potential.

Over the last decade, terms referring more directly to practical interventions or situations of learning were more favoured within ELT: 'individualisation', than 'learner independence', for example. One sign of the shift to 'learner autonomy' as a preferred term has been the recent name change of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) 'Learner

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Independence' Special Interest Group (SIG) to 'Learner Autonomy' SIG. The concept of learner autonomy has been a matter of significant interest within the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) community (Vickers & Ene, 2006). In recent years, there has been a remarkable surge in theoretical exploration and practical application of autonomy in language teaching and learning (Benson, 2006).

Almusharraf (2018) emphasises the importance of teachers being conscious of the advantages of promoting learner autonomy and being equipped to address any associated challenges. First, as research revealed, autonomous learning leads to higher motivation to learn a language (Li, 2015; Tseng & Schmitt, 2008). Second, studies like Dogan and Mirici (2017); Hu and Zhang (2017); Kameli et al. (2012); Kristmanson et al. (2013); Phan and Hamid (2017); and Tuan (2011) have shown that teachers' implementation of autonomous learning strategies supports the development of EFL learners' language proficiency. Thus, English teachers should prioritise deploying autonomous learning approaches that advance students' learning development.

Palfreyman and Benson (2019) assert that the teacher's role lies in skilfully scaffolding the learner's attempts to take control of their learning decisions and performance in the second language. Parvaneh et al. (2020) showed that the flipped classroom approach statistically impacted the participants' learner autonomy and language anxiety. Rezabeigi and colleagues (2021) found that EFL teachers' autonomy-supportive behaviours led to improvements in various domains, including learners' acceptance of greater responsibility, enhanced self-awareness as learners, better understanding of the learning context, improved mastery of the learning process, and increased engagement in self-initiated learning activities.

In another study by Wang and Chen (2024), it was demonstrated that College English teachers are conscious of learner autonomy. Their outlooks towards it are generally favourable, and students are treated increasingly as equal moral agents instead of passive containers, which are inferior to teachers. Beyond defining the concept and elucidating its benefits, it is essential to characterise the autonomous learner. The autonomous learner is inherently proactive in learning, actively generating ideas and seizing learning opportunities rather than merely reacting to the teacher's prompts (Boud, 1988; Kohonen, 1992; Knowles, 1975). For Rathbone (1971 cited in Candy, 1991: 271), the autonomous learner is a self-activated meaning maker, an active agent in their learning process, shaping their learning experiences through their own volition.

Kassem (2019) defines autonomous learning as student-centred instruction (SCI) and suggests that SCI significantly enhances motivation and achievement in EFL students compared to teacher-centred instruction (TCI). It highlights the recommendation for foreign language teachers to adopt SCI and cultivate a conducive classroom environment for learning. Budianto and Masson (2022) define an autonomous learner as someone who values monitoring and evaluating their language learning progress. Earlier, Ramadhiyah and Lengkanawati (2019) conducted a case study in Indonesia to explore the perceptions of a teacher and 36 senior high school students on learner autonomy and identified how the teacher promoted learner autonomy during EFL curriculum implementation.

Iamudom and Tangkiengsirisin (2020) conducted a study in Thailand using a mixed methods design to investigate the level of learner autonomy and the use of English learning strategies among Thai EFL students in Thai public schools and international schools. The results showed that Thai public school students' level of learner autonomy regarding their willingness, self-confidence, motivation, and capacity to learn autonomously was higher than that of international school students. Further, Thai EFL students in Thai public schools use learning strategies more than in international schools.

Another research in Thailand by Swatevacharkul and Boonma (2021) assessed ELT students' learner autonomy in terms of technical, psychological, political-philosophical, and sociocultural dimensions. The results revealed that, on average, the students had a high level of learner autonomy in every dimension. Goal setting best contributed to the student's high level of learner autonomy. Tuan (2021) conducted a mixed-methods study on Vietnamese EFL student perceptions and practices of autonomous learning. The findings revealed that the students perceived learner autonomy was necessary for their English language learning. Still, their perceived ability to learn autonomously and practice autonomous activities was only above average.

There is a pressing need for empirical research on the relationship between autonomy development and language proficiency acquisition for practical and theoretical reasons. The hypothesis that practices intended to foster autonomy led to better language learning can be demonstrated empirically at two levels. One level is that research can attempt to show that a particular form of practice associated with autonomy produces gains in proficiency equal to or greater than other forms of practice. Another level is that research can attempt to describe how proficiency develops due to the distinctive qualities of practices designed to promote autonomy.

This research explores advanced EFL learners' ability to improve grammar achievement by autonomously noticing and correcting their grammatical errors. This research emphasises the need to help L2 learners see their own L2 use compared to the use of the target language produced by native speakers. This research has chosen to study the learners' use of conditional sentences because they are complex forms that either do not appear in their writing or appear with errors. The primary objective of this study was to investigate the impact of autonomous tasks on the grammar achievement of EFL learners. To accomplish this purpose, a question and a hypothesis have been formulated as follows:

RQ   Do autonomous tasks significantly affect EFL learners' grammar achievement?

HØ   Autonomous tasks do not substantially affect EFL learners' grammar achievement.

To sum up, there is a pressing need for research exploring the relationship between the development of autonomy and language proficiency. From a practical point of view, such research can help validate forms of practice that foster autonomy in terms of language-learning gains. Theoretically, it can help us test and elaborate the theoretical hypothesis that autonomy in language learning is equivalent to better language learning.

2.0   METHODOLOGY

2.1   Participants

Ninety male and female undergraduate students of English Translation at Azad University of Hamadan were screened as the study participants. They had all passed Writing 1 and 2 courses, and at the time of the research, they were passing the advanced writing course. The classes were mixed with male and female students. A Preliminary English Test (PET) was used to select 60 students from among them and ensure their homogeneity. The listening and speaking parts were excluded from the test as they were irrelevant to this study. The need for more time and the non-existence of facilities were other reasons.

This selection of the sampling is based on the grading system of the Islamic Azad University in Iran. Learners who scored above 90% have mastered the target form (conditional sentences) and were not included in this study. On the other hand, learners who obtained below 45% were also not included because the score indicated they were yet ready to know about the form. All the selected learners (60 students), aged between 20 and 30, were considered developmentally suited to learn the forms. They were divided into 30 in the experimental group and 30 in the control group.

2.2   Research Instruments and Pilot Study

Before commencing the study, a pilot test of the Preliminary English Test (PET) was conducted. PET is one of the Cambridge English exams using the four skills. Nevertheless, only the reading and writing parts were relevant and included in this study. The test was used to ensure students' homogeneity regarding their general English language proficiency and select 60 students from among them (Appendix A). The two groups were then considered as the control and experimental groups. The test was piloted first to ensure its reliability and item facility. The test's reliability coefficient was calculated to be 0.79, reassuring a sufficiently high level of reliability.

2.3   Data Collection Procedures

An 18-item grammar test (conditional sentences) was administered to both groups as a pre-test to ensure they were homogeneous concerning their knowledge of conditional clauses. Based on the pre-test, the instructor determined how much learners could produce these sentences to investigate the subjects' (experimental group) ability to locate the mismatch between the use of conditional sentences in their own written output and the use of the forms in authentic texts (Appendix C). The reason for studying the learner's use of conditional sentences was that they are complex forms that either do not appear in the learner's writing or usually appear with errors. Hence, after the pre-test, a series of tasks were assigned to the experimental group to get them to locate a mismatch between their own written output using conditional sentences and an authentic passage containing these sentences. The experimental group performed the tasks in three sessions of 45 minutes each.

2.3.1   Session I

Learners were asked to write a paragraph based on prompts to show their ability to produce paragraphs using conditional sentences for three types. The prompts were as follows.

Type I   Some friends are planning a party. Everybody wants to be at the party, but nobody is really keen on preparing and organizing the party. So, everybody comes up with a few conditions to ensure the others will do something.

Type II   Janine is a daydreamer. She imagines what would happen if she won the lottery.

Type III   Sometimes, in the past, I wanted to send an invitation to a friend. I didn't find her address, however. So, in the end, I didn't send her an invitation.

2.3.2   Session II

Learners read the rule explanation of the conditional sentences (Appendix D) followed by a text from Streamline book (departures), in which various uses of these tenses were bolded to make the form salient in the texts. Then, the researcher returned the paragraphs the learners had written in session 1. At the bottom of the paragraphs the learners had produced in the first session, the researcher wrote the number of errors the learners had made using the conditional clauses. The learners were then encouraged to compare their use of the conditional sentences in paragraphs they wrote in session 1 to their use in texts to correct their errors. The learners crossed out the errors and wrote above them correctly.

2.3.3   Session II

Learners wrote paragraphs based on different prompts. This time, after writing about the prompts, the learners found their grammatical errors without the teacher's help, corrected them, and consulted with other learners in their group (in this session, the class were divided into six groups). Then, they were made to talk about their errors and their correct forms. The prompts were as follows.

Type I   I know John very well, and I know that he earns a lot and loves Ferraris. So, I think it is very likely that sooner or later, he will have the money to buy a Ferrari.

Type II   I would like to send an invitation to a friend. I have looked everywhere for her address, but I cannot find it. So now I think it is rather unlikely that I will eventually find her address.

Type III   Imagine that your university hired a terrible teacher the month before. Now, hypothesise about serving on the committee that hired the terrible teacher.

The following week, after the learners had completed all the tasks, they were tested using conditional sentences in a post-test (Appendix B). The test consisted of 18 production items to identify development in grammatical points. The pre-test and post-test were the same production format, but the content of each item on the test was different. The control group did not have any treatment. They had their routine program of advanced writing course, in which the teacher gave them a topic to write a paragraph using conditional sentences. Then, the teacher explained every grammatical point in that text related to conditional sentences. A t-test was utilised to determine the difference between the means of the two groups. The data were also subjected to descriptive statistics using the statistical package for social science (SPSS) to determine the mean and standard deviation.

3.0   RESULTS

A total of ninety male and female undergraduate students majoring in English Translation at Azad University of Hamadan (Iran) participated in this study. These students had completed Writing 1 and 2 courses and were concurrently enrolled in the advanced writing course at the time of the research. The PET test was administered to ensure their general English language proficiency homogeneity. The following analyses summarise the results of the PET test. The primary aim of this pre-test was to establish homogeneity between the two groups concerning the dependent variable, which is their knowledge of the target grammar point.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the PET test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00001	90	6.00	59.00	38.3444	13.38384
Valid N (listwise)	90				

To validate the use of the t-test, verifying the normality of the score distribution within both groups was imperative. The normality index is calculated by dividing the skewness statistic by its standard error, resulting in a value of 1.38 (i.e., 0.59 / 0.427). This index suggests that the scores are generally distributed since the result falls between -1.96 and +1.96, indicating a relatively normal data distribution. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the pre-test scores obtained by the experimental group.

Table 2

Descriptive analysis of the pre-test used in the experimental group

			Statistic	Std. Error
	Mean		10.3083	.73272
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	8.8098	
		Upper Bound	11.8069	
	5% Trimmed Mean		10.3519	
	Median		9.8750	
	Variance		16.106	
VAR00001	Std. Deviation		4.01328	
	Minimum		1.50	
	Maximum		17.50	
	Range		16.00	
	Interquartile Range		6.38	
	Skewness		.59	.427
	Kurtosis		-.428	.833

Table 3 presents the control group's pre-test scores, which were analysed for their descriptive statistics. The mean score in the control group is 10.65, and the standard deviation is 3.77. The normality index is acceptable at 0.091 (.039/.427).

Table 3

Descriptive analysis of the pre-test used in the control group

			Statistic	Std. Error
	Mean		10.6500	.68864
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	9.2416	
		Upper Bound	12.0584	
	5% Trimmed Mean		10.6296	
	Median		10.2500	
	Variance		14.227	
VAR00001	Std. Deviation		3.77183	
	Minimum		4.00	
	Maximum		18.00	
	Range		14.00	
	Interquartile Range		5.25	
	Skewness		.039	.427
	Kurtosis		-.580	.833

Therefore, a t-test was run because the two sets of scores were shown to be normally distributed (Table 4). The analysis of the pre-test scores revealed that the difference between the mean scores of the two groups is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$, $t = -0.340$). This suggests that, based on the means of the two groups, the researcher concluded that the learners in both groups performed similarly and were homogeneous regarding their knowledge of conditional sentences.

Table 4

T-test for comparing the mean scores of the pre-test of two groups

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
							Lower	Upper	
.046	.830	-.340	58	.735	-.34167	1.00554	-2.35447	1.67113
		-.340	57.778	.735	-.34167	1.00554	-2.35463	1.67130

Following the pre-test, a series of tasks were designed as a treatment for learners in the experimental group. One week after the learners completed all the tasks, they underwent a post-test to evaluate their use of conditional sentences after the instructional period. The post-test consisted of 18 production items, measuring the learners' knowledge of conditional sentences and enabling a comparison between the two groups.

The pre-test and post-test were the same production format, but the content of each item on the test was different. Table 5 shows the result of the post-test in the control group. The mean score is 12.37, and the standard deviation is 3.98. The normality index is -1.26 (-.539/.427), which is acceptable.

Table 5

Descriptive analysis of the post-test used in the control group

			Statistic	Std. Error
VAR00004	Mean		12.3750	.72820
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	10.8857	
		Upper Bound	13.8643	
	5% Trimmed Mean		12.4907	
	Median		13.0000	
	Variance		15.908	
	Std. Deviation		3.98853	
	Minimum		4.50	
	Maximum		18.00	
	Range		13.50	
	Interquartile Range		7.00	
	Skewness		-.539	.427
	Kurtosis		-.817	.833

The experimental group's mean score is 14.75, and the standard deviation is 3.9. The normality index is -0.629 (-0.269/0.427), an acceptable amount. Table 6 presents the group's post-test results.

Table 6

Descriptive analysis of the post-test in the experimental group

			Statistic	Std. Error
VAR00006	Mean		14.7500	.71469
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	13.2883	
		Upper Bound	16.2117	
	Median		16.0000	
	Variance		15.323	
	Std. Deviation		3.91450	
	Minimum		.00	
	Maximum		18.00	
	Range		18.00	
	Skewness		-.269	.427
	Kurtosis		6.193	.833

The data for both groupings were descriptively analysed to determine the effect of using autonomous tasks on the participants' grammar achievement (Table 7).

Table 7

Descriptive analyses of the two groups after the treatment

	Grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Grammar Knowledge	autonomous learners	30	14.8167	3.66362	.66888
	non-autonomous learners	30	12.3750	3.98853	.72820

Table 7 shows that the experimental group achieved a mean score of 14.81, while the control group attained a mean score of 12.37. A t-test was conducted to ascertain the significance of the difference between these two groups, and the results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

T-Test results for comparing the means of two groups in the post-test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
.815	.370	2.328	58	.023	2.37500	1.02032	.33260	4.41740
		2.328	57.980	.023	2.37500	1.02032	.33259	4.41741

There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups ($p < 0.05$, t=2.328). Based on these means, the researcher concludes that learners in the experimental group (EG) performed better on the test, and this improved performance appears to be a direct result of the treatment involving the use of autonomous tasks. This significant difference in mean scores between the experimental and control groups on the post-test leads to rejecting the null hypothesis, which suggested that autonomous tasks would not significantly affect the EFL learners' grammar achievement. In other words, using autonomous tasks notably impacted the EFL learners' grammar achievement. The experimental group, with a mean score of 14.75, outperformed the control group. Based on all the results, the EG's performance improved due to the treatment, and participants in this group performed better than those in the control group. The difference is visually represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

A bar graph of both groups' means scores in the post-test results
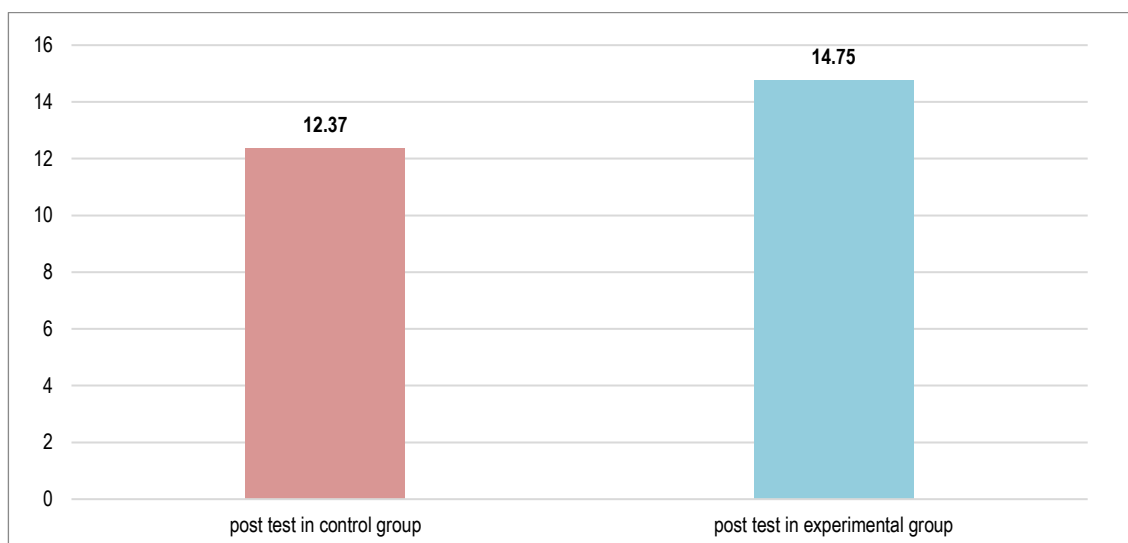
4.0   DISCUSSION

The results suggested that such a comparison task is beneficial in allowing learners to gain grammar achievement. Having the learners compare their texts to native speaker reformulations will enable learners to be autonomous in finding their output errors. The first important consideration is the text used for comparison purposes. The present study used a relatively simple text for advanced EFL learners. It is essential not to use texts that are difficult and unfamiliar to the learners, as their attentional resources would be allocated to the content of the text rather than to the use of grammatical form in the text. Therefore, texts focusing on grammatical form should be appropriate to the task.

One limitation of this study has been the students' reluctance to cooperate with the researcher as fully as possible because the treatments were done at the end of class time when students felt too tired to pay careful attention to what was outside their routine program. Another factor that limited this study was that the researcher was not available for the whole class. The research was confined to 20 to 30 minutes of class time since it was conducted at Azad University of Hamadan, and the teacher was not the researcher. Much more practice could have been done if the researcher could have used the whole class time.

Classroom research may further explore the benefit of learner autonomy in other language learning contexts. The teacher's role in helping learners notice the mismatch most likely depends on the learners' experience with language learning and their motivation as language learners. In some contexts, teachers may need to be more involved with learners' efforts to notice grammatical form, while in other contexts, the learners may benefit more robustly from autonomous tasks. Individual teachers must ultimately make these decisions as they fully understand their learners' needs.

Although the present study provided evidence that engaging learners in an autonomous correction task allows for more outstanding grammar achievement, it did not provide evidence that such an autonomous task raises learner awareness of the learning process. Further research should address systematically whether engaging learners in autonomous tasks is beneficial for a greater understanding of the learning process.

5.0   CONCLUSION

This study attempted to investigate the effect of autonomous tasks on EFL learners' grammar achievement by exploring advanced learners' ability to improve grammar achievement by autonomously noticing and correcting their grammatical errors. Therefore, it is vital to consider classroom tasks that encourage autonomous language learning behaviour. Working with students taking an advanced writing course, the researcher engaged the subjects in functions in which they compared their use of grammatical form in their own written output to the use of grammatical form as written by a native speaker and by revising their writings. Based on the comparison between their written production and the native speaker's text and their revisions of their writings, learners subsequently corrected grammatical errors related to conditional clauses.

The subjects in this study made gains in terms of accurate use of the conditional sentences by comparing their use of the conditionals to their use in an authentic text. Therefore, the self-correction task in an advanced writing course class seems effective. The learning benefit from self-correction tasks suggests that learner autonomy is viable, at least for advanced EFL learners. However, the finding in this study that self-correction tasks allow for more outstanding grammar achievement has important classroom implications. When devising autonomous language learning tasks, it is crucial to consider the materials used within the task and the population of learners engaging in it.

In this study, the teacher highlights using the target grammatical form in the native speaker's text. It is interesting to consider other ways to draw learners' attention to grammatical form within texts that might also be effective in the classroom. Two suggestions are identified as follows.

1. Learners underline the form in the native speaker text rather than the teacher highlighting the form.

2. Learners skim the native speaker's text to locate the use of the grammatical form.

The methods might allow learners to locate the grammatical form to find the mismatch between the use of the grammatical form in the native-speaker texts and their use of the grammatical form in their own written output. Classroom research could be beneficial in devising various practical classroom tasks that allow learners to locate and correct grammatical errors by comparing their output to native speaker input.

Classroom research may further explore the benefit of learner autonomy in other language learning contexts. The teacher's role in helping learners notice the mismatch most likely depends on the learners' experience with language learning and their motivation as language learners. In some contexts, teachers may need to be more involved with learners' efforts to notice grammatical form, while in other contexts, the learners may benefit more robustly from autonomous tasks. Individual teachers must ultimately make these decisions as they fully understand their learners' needs.

Although the present study provided evidence that engaging learners in an autonomous correction task allows for more outstanding grammar achievement, it did not provide evidence that such an autonomous task raises learner awareness of the learning process. Further research should address systematically whether engaging learners in autonomous tasks is beneficial for a greater understanding of the learning process.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Leila Asgari (Conceptualisation, Methodology, Validation, Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Resources; Software; Visualisation; Writing original draft; Writing - review & editing; Funding acquisition; Project administration)

Behdokht Mal Amiri (Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Resources; Software; Visualisation; Writing - review & editing; Funding acquisition; Supervision)

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APPENDIX A

Pre-test

Name   : ....

Sex   : Female/Male   Date: ....

Now, please rewrite the following sentences as a second conditional.

1.   We don't protect white dolphins. They become extinct.
2.   There are no bees. Flowers are not pollinated.
3.   You cook your turkey like this. You have a tender turkey.
4.   You get a flat tyre. You have to change it.
5.   I let her down now. Philippa doesn't speak to me again.
6.   She goes to the store. She buys ice cream.

Now, please rewrite the following sentences as a second conditional.

1.   I don't win the lottery. I don't buy you a present.
2.   She doesn't know the answer. She doesn't tell us the answer.
3.   She probably doesn't study for exams. She doesn't get better grades.
4.   George doesn't have enough money. He doesn't buy a new car.
5.   I don't have a house in the mountains. I don't go there every week.
6.   I don't own a lonely island. I don't build a huge house by the beach.

Now, please rewrite the following sentences as a third conditional.

1.   You didn't study for the test. You didn't pass it.
2.   You didn't ask me. I didn't help you.
3.   We didn't go to the cinema. We didn't see our friend Jacob.
4.   I didn't send you a postcard. I didn't have your address.
5.   She didn't take the bus, and she didn't arrive on time.
6.   Jack didn't see the iceberg. He didn't tell the captain.

APPENDIX B

Post-test

Name   : ....

Sex   : Female/Male   Date: ....

Instruction: Rewrite the following sentences in the form of first conditional sentences.

Conditional Sentences Type I

1.   Caroline and Sue prepare the salad. Phil decorates the house.
2.   You are not able to sleep. You (watch) this scary film.
3.   You know the rules. You win the game.
4.   Alan and Rebecca organise the food. Mary and Conor make the sandwiches.
5.   Bob looks after the barbecue. Sue let the guests in.
6.   Frank plays the DJ. The others bring along their CDs.

Conditional Sentences Type II

1.   I don't play the lottery. I don't have a chance to hit the jackpot.
2.   I don't buy a lonely island. I don't find a nice one.
3.   I don't invite all my friends. I don't have a house by the beach.
4.   He doesn't have more time. He doesn't learn karate.
5.   My brother doesn't buy a sports car. He doesn't have the money.
6.   I don't feel better. I won't go to the cinema with you.

Conditional Sentences Type III

1.   You didn't ask me. I didn't help you.
2.   We didn't go to the cinema. We didn't see my friend Jacob.
3.   You didn't speak English. She didn't understand.
4.   They didn't listen to me. We weren't home earlier.
5.   It started to rain. We didn't walk to the museum.
6.   She didn't take the bus. She didn't arrive on time.

APPENDIX C

Authentic Texts

Name: ....   Date: ....

In the following text, please determine the underlined type of conditional sentence, compare this text with your test, and correct your sentences.

ENERGY CRISIS

'Good evening, and welcome again to the 'Michael Parkhurst Talkabout'. In tonight's programme, we're looking at the problem of energy. The world's energy resources are limited. Nobody knows exactly how much fuel is left, but pessimistic forecasts say that there is only enough coal for 450 years, enough natural gas for 50 years and that oil might run out in 30 years. Obviously we have to do something, and we have to do it soon!

I'd like to welcome our first guest, Professor Marvin Burnham of the New England Institute of Technology. Professor Burnham.'

'Well, we are in an energy crisis and we will have to do something quickly. Fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) are rapidly running out. The tragedy is that fossil fuels are far too valuable to waste on the production of electricity. Just think of all the things you can make from oil! If we don't start conserving these things now, it will be too late. And nuclear power is the only real alternative. We are getting some electricity from nuclear power-stations already. If we invest in further research now, we'll be ready to face the future. There's been a lot of protest lately against nuclear power — some people will protest at anything — but nuclear power-stations are not as dangerous as some people say. It's far more dangerous to work down a coal-mine or on a North Sea oil-rig. Safety regulations in power-stations are very strict.

If we spent money on research now, we could develop stations which create their own fuel and burn their own waste. In many parts of the world where there are no fossil fuels, nuclear power is the only alternative. If you accept that we need electricity, then we will need nuclear energy. Just imagine what the world would be like if we didn't have electricity — no heating, no lighting, no transport, no radio or TV. Just think about the ways you use electricity every day. Surely we don't want to go back to the Stone Age. That's what will happen if we turn our backs on nuclear research.'

'Thank you, Professor. Our next guest is a member of CANE, the Campaign Against Nuclear Energy, Jennifer Hughes.'

'Right. I must disagree totally with Professor Burnham. Let's look at the facts. First, there is no perfect machine. I mean, why do aeroplanes crash? Machines fail. People make mistakes. What would happen if there were a serious nuclear accident? And an accident must be inevitable — sooner or later. Huge areas would be evacuated, and they could remain contaminated with radioactivity for years. If it happened in your area, you wouldn't get a penny in compensation. No insurance company covers nuclear risks. There are accidents. If the nuclear industry didn't keep them quiet, there would be a public outcry. Radioactivity causes cancer and may affect future generations.

Next, nuclear waste. There is no technology for absolutely safe disposal. Some of this waste will remain active for thousands of years. Is that what you want to leave to your children? And their children's children? A reactor only lasts about 25 years. By the year 2000 we'll have 'retired' 26 reactors in the UK.

Next, terrorism. Terrorists could hold the nation to ransom if they captured a reactor. In the USA the Savannah River plant, and Professor Burnham knows this very well, lost (yes, 'lost') enough plutonium be-tween 1955 and 1978 to make 18 (18!) atom bombs. Where is it? Who's got it? I consider that nuclear energy is expensive, dangerous, and evil, and most of all, absolutely unnecessary. But Dr Woodstock will be saying more about that.'

'Thank you Jennifer. Now I'm very pleased to welcome Dr Catherine Woodstock. She is the author of several books on alternative technology.'

'Hello. I'd like to begin by agreeing with Jennifer. We can develop alternative sources of power, and unless we try we'll never succeed. Instead of burning fossil fuels we should be concentrating on more economic uses of electricity, because electricity can be produced from any source of energy. If we didn't waste so much energy, our resources would last longer. You can save more energy by conservation than you can produce for the same money. Unless we do research on solar energy, wind power, wave power, tidal power, hydroelectric schemes etc, our fossil fuels will run out, and we'll all freeze or starve to death. Other countries are spending much more than us on research, and don't forget that energy from the sun, the waves and the wind lasts for ever. We really won't survive unless we start working on cleaner, safer sources of energy.'

'Thank you very much, Dr Woodstock. Our final speaker, before we open the discussion to the studio audience, is Charles Wicks, MP, the Minister for Energy.'

'I've been listening to the other speakers with great interest. By the way, I don't agree with some of the estimates of world energy reserves. More oil and gas is being discovered all the time. If we listened to the pessimists (and there are a lot of them about) none of us would sleep at night. In the short-term, we must continue to rely on the fossil fuels — oil, coal and gas. But we must also look to the future. Our policy must be flexible. Unless we thought new research was necessary, we wouldn't be spending money on it. After all, the Government wouldn't have a Department of Energy unless they thought it was important. The big question is where to spend the money — on conservation of present resources or on research into new forms of power. But I'm fairly optimistic. I wouldn't be in this job unless I were an optimist!'

Unit 36

Transatlantic Airways
The Golden West 14 days   San Francisco 6 nights   Las Vegas 2 nights   Los Angeles 6 nights

Can you see yourself riding a cable-car in San Francisco, eating fresh crab and lobster at Fisherman's Wharf, winning a fortune in the casinos of Las Vegas or walking with the stars along Hollywood Boulevard? Transatlantic Airways invite you to spend two unforgettable weeks in the cities of California and Nevada and enjoy the glitter and the glamour of the Golden West.

Every city has it own character – San Francisco with the Golden Gate Bridge, Chinatown, cable-cars climbing up the steep hills, restaurants serving food from every country in the world. You'll be offered tours to see the scenery of Monterey and Carmel, and the breathtaking views from the Pacific Coast Highway.

Then you join in the razzamatazz of Las Vegas, the gambling capital of the world, set in the Nevada Desert. Las Vegas never sleeps and the entertainment is the finest in the world. And from Las Vegas there's an optional flight over the spectacular Grand Canyon.

Finally you arrive in Los Angeles, home of the movie industry. Sunset Strip, Beverly Hills and Hollywood all wait to welcome you. You'll be able to choose any number of excursions – the wonderful world of Disneyland, Universal Film Studios or even a shopping trip to Mexico.

This exciting three-centre tour offers you a golden opportunity to experience the special atmosphere of the Golden West.

HOLIDAY USA

Mark and Emma Austin are a young couple in their late twenties. Emma was interviewed about the holiday.

'On the whole we enjoyed it very much, but it was pretty tiring. We went on most of the excursions, because we didn't want to miss anything. We really felt we needed more time. If we went again, we'd stay longer. We would have spent more time in San Francisco and less time in Los Angeles if we'd known more about the cities. Los Angeles was a bit disappointing. We went on a tour of Beverly Hills to see the 'houses of the stars'. Unless you'd studied film history, you would never have heard of most of them! Generally speaking, the hotels, food and service were excellent. We found Americans particularly friendly. We probably took too much luggage. Clothes in the States were so cheap! It would have been a good idea to take empty suitcases! If we'd done that, the savings on clothes would almost have paid for the air fare!'

Jack and Vera Drake are a retired couple. Jack was asked about the holiday.

'We'd been looking forward to this trip for years, and it was the holiday of a lifetime. I think we liked Las Vegas most, but two nights were probably enough! If we'd stayed there much longer, we'd have lost all our money! We saw Tom Jones at the Desert Inn. I've never seen anything like that place! Disneyland is a 'must' for anyone with children. If only we'd had our grandchildren with us! They would have loved it! We went on some of the excursions, and we could have gone on more, but you can't see everything, can you? I didn't think much of American beer, but Californian wine was a nice surprise. We wouldn't have chosen this tour unless it had been escorted. We're both in our seventies and we couldn't have managed on our own. Everybody was so helpful to us!'

Unit 40

APPENDIX D

Conditional Sentences Notes

A.   THE 1ST CONDITIONAL

IF + DOES, WILL DO
If + present simple tense, will + bare infinitive

In the first conditional, 'if' is used to speculate about the future consequences of a specific event. In this case, the verb in the second part of the sentence is preceded by will.

>   If they offer a good price, we will buy the whole consignment.

COMMON MISTAKE. We do not use will in the if part of the sentence.

In a sentence with an if-clause, we can use the imperative or modal verbs instead of will + infinitive.

>   If you hear from Susan today, tell her to ring me.
>   If the traffic is terrible, I may get home late.

Conditionals: if, unless, in case, provided that, as long as, so that

If and unless

Unless means the same as if ... not, it always refers to the conditional part of the sentence and not the result part of the sentence:

>   If he doesn't get here soon, we will have to start the meeting without him.
>   Unless he gets here soon, we will have to start the meeting without him.

We often use not + unless, which means only ... if, when we want to emphasise a condition:

>   They will only sign the contract if we give them an additional discount.
>   They won't sign the contract unless we give them an additional discount.

If and in case

We use 'in case' to talk about precautions we will take before a problem happens. We use 'if' to talk about what we will do after a problem happens:

>   We will ensure the shipment in case the goods get damaged in transit.
>   (We will take our insurance first; the problem may or may not happen afterwards.)

>   If the goods get damaged in transit, we'll make a claim.
>   (The damage may happen, and we will make a claim afterwards.)

Note: In sentences within case, we often use going to rather than will because we often talk about something we have already decided to do.

Provided that vs as long as, etc.

We can use 'provided that'/'providing', 'as long as', and 'so long as' to emphasise the condition.

Provided that and as long as mean if and only if (providing and so long as are a little less formal):

>   I will agree to these conditions provided that they increase my salary.
>   (I will only agree if they give me more money.)

>   The strike will be successful as long as we all stay together.
>   (It will only succeed if we all stay together.)

So that

We use 'so that' to say what the result or purpose of an action will be:

>   I'll take a credit card so that we don't run out of money.
>   (The credit card will stop us from running out of money)

B.   THE 2ND CONDITIONAL

IF + DID, WOULD DO
If + past tense, would + infinitive

The 2nd conditional can be used to refer to less probable or impossible situations. The verb in the second part is preceded by would / should / could / might. The if-clause can appear in the first or second part of the sentence.

> If I knew her number, I would send her a fax.
> I would send her a fax if I knew her number.

COMMON MISTAKE. We do not use would in the if part of the sentence. This form refers to present or future time.

> If these machines were not so expensive, we would buy them.
> If we hired a lawyer, we would recover our debts more quickly.
> If I lost my job tomorrow, I would move to London to find the same job.

The first two sentences refer to the present situation and imagine a situation different from reality. In the third, we are talking about a possible event in the future, but using the second conditional, we make it clear that we do not think it will happen. It is also possible to use might and could instead of would.

> If we received credit, we could expand much more rapidly.

In the if-clause, we can use were instead of was. This is very common when we give advice using the expression If I were you ...

> If I were you, I would have another look through those figures.

C.   THE 3RD CONDITIONAL

IF + HAD DONE, WOULD + HAVE DONE
If + past perfect tense, would + present perfect

The 3rd conditional is used when talking about things that didn't happen in the past (and the consequence if they had happened). The verb in the second part is used with would / should / could / might (+ have + past participle).

> If I'd known it was a formal party, I wouldn't have worn jeans and a jumper. I would have worn suitable attire.