

University Lecturers' Attitudes towards Learner Autonomy in the EFL Context in Vietnam

Authors : Nhung T. Bui

Abstract : Part of the dilemma facing educational reforms in Vietnam as in other Asian contexts is how to encourage more independence in students' learning approaches. Since 2005, the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam has included the students' ability to learn independently in its national education objectives. While learner autonomy has been viewed as a goal in the teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) and there has been a considerable literature on strategies to stimulate autonomy in learners, teachers' voices have rarely been heard. Given that teachers play a central role in helping their students to be more autonomous, especially in an inherent Confucian heritage culture like Vietnam, their attitudes towards learner autonomy should be investigated before any practical implementations could be undertaken. This paper reports significant findings of a survey questionnaire with 262 lecturers of English from 5 universities in Hanoi, Vietnam giving opinions regarding the practices and prospects of learner autonomy in their classrooms. The study reveals that lecturers perceive they should be more responsible than their students in all class-related activities; they most appreciate their students' ability to learn cooperatively and that they consider stimulating students' interest as the most important teaching strategy to promote learner autonomy. Lecturers, then, are strongly suggested to gradually 'empower' their students through the application of out-of-classroom activities; of learning activities which requires collaboration and team spirit; and of activities which could boost students' interest in learning English.

Keywords : English as a foreign language, higher education, learner autonomy, Vietnam

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