

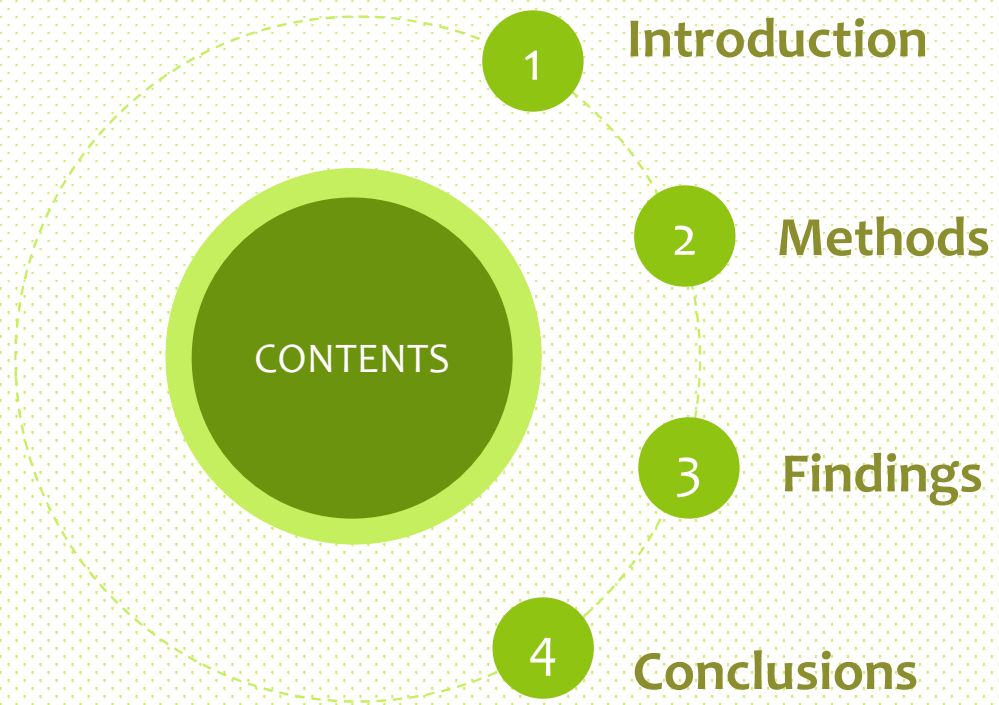
# **A Review of Research on Learner Autonomy over the Past 20 Years in China**

Nanyun Li<sup>1,2</sup> and Hyesook Park<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kunsan National University, Korea, <sup>2</sup>Jiujiang University, China

GETA 2020





# 1. Introduction

## Definition of learner autonomy

Holec (1981) defined learner autonomy (LA) as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3).

## Development in China

Since Holec first introduced the concept of LA into foreign language teaching, it has been studied for nearly 40 years.

Li Hong (1998) published a paper titled *Learner Autonomy and English Teaching in China*, which marked the beginning of LA research in China.



# 1. Introduction

Gao (2005, 2006) summarized three stages of LA research: The budding period (1991-2000), the slow development period (2001-2003), and the all-around start-up period (2004-).

Liu and Dong (2012) found that LA studies mainly focus on theories, rather than on empiricism.

Yin (2014) inspected the LA studies from 1979 to 2012 in terms of research objects and data analysis methods.

Wang (2013) revealed that Chinese LA research has made certain progress in the aspects of the number of published papers and the diversity of research methods from 1998 to 2012.

Not much literature on the research status of LA in China.  
Lack of systematic literature statistics from 2013 to 2019.

The present study aims to provide a critical review of LA regarding English as a foreign language teaching in China over the past 20 years.

## 2. Methods



154 LA research papers (1998-2019) published in 13 Chinese foreign language core journals were analyzed in terms of the number of papers, research methods, research participants, research contents, and influencing factors.



## 2. Methods

Table 1. List of 13 mainland Chinese foreign language core Journals

No.	Chinese Title	Journal Title	Compound Impact Factors
1	外语界	Foreign Language World	3.943
2	现代外语	Modern Foreign Languages	3.548
3	外语与外语教学	Foreign Languages and Their Teaching	2.270
4	外语电化教学	Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Education	2.213
5	外语教学与研究	Foreign Language Teaching and Research	2.157
6	中国外语	Foreign Languages in China	2.144
7	外语教学	Foreign Language Education	1.783
8	外语教学理论与实践	Foreign Language Learning Theory and Practice	1.421
9	外国语	Journal of Foreign Languages	1.286
10	外语研究	Foreign Languages Research	1.189
11	解放军外国语学院学报	Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages	1.155
12	外语学刊	Foreign Language Research	1.155
13	西安外国语大学学报	Journal of Xi'an International Studies University	1.051



## 2. Methods

**cnki 中国知网** cnki.net

文献 **期刊** 博硕士 会议 报纸 图书 年鉴 百科 词典 统计数据 专利 成果 更多>>

高级检索 专业检索 作者发文检索 句子检索 一框式检索

新型出版模式介绍 期刊导航

文献分类目录 全选 清除

- ☒ 基础科学
- ☒ 工程技术 I 辑
- ☒ 工程技术 II 辑
- ☒ 农业科技
- ☒ 医药卫生科技
- ☒ 哲学与人文科学
- ☒ 社会科学 I 辑
- ☒ 社会科学 II 辑
- ☒ 信息科技
- ☒ 经济与管理科学

广告 托马斯 招聘启事

为我推荐

- 试理论性是认同和自主性的必要内涵——对一种非理性主义的自主性概念的批判

输入检索条件: **Keywords**

或者	篇名	自主性	词频	并含	词频	精确
或者	篇名	自主学习	词频	并含	词频	精确
或者	篇名	自导	词频	并含	词频	精确
或者	篇名	自我导向	词频	并含	词频	精确
或者	篇名	自我定向	词频	并含	词频	精确
或者	篇名	自我调节	词频	并含	词频	精确
作者	中文/英文/拼音	精确	作者单位	全称/简称/曾用名	模糊	

从 1998 年到 2019 年 指定期: 更新时间: 不限

来源期刊: 国外外语教学+外国语+上海外国语大学学报+外国语+上海外国语学院学报+解放军外国语学院学 精确

来源类别: ☒ 全部期刊 ☐ SCI来源期刊 ☐ EI来源期刊 ☐ 核心期刊 ☐ CSSCI ☐ CSCD

支持基金: 模糊

☐ 包含资讯 ☐ 网络首发 ☐ 增强出版 ☐ 数据论文 ☐ 中英文扩展 ☐ 同义词扩展

检索

结果中检索

分组浏览: 主题 发表年度 研究层次 作者 机构 基金

排序: 相关性 发表时间 被引 下载

中文文献 外文文献 列表 摘要

每页显示: 10 20 50

已选文献: 0 清除 批量下载 导出/参考文献 计量可视化分析

Output 找到 160 条结果 1/8 >

### 3. Findings

An overall upward trend in the number of papers published, reaching the maximum from 2006 to 2009.

Table 2. Research papers (1998-2019)

Journal	1998- 2001	2002- 2005	2006- 2009	2010- 2013	2014- 2019	Total	Percent (%)
Foreign Language Education		4	7	5	9	25	16.23
Foreign Language Teaching and Research		2				2	1.30
Foreign Language World	2	11	18	8	4	43	27.92
Foreign Languages and Their Teaching	1		8	2	3	14	9.09
Foreign Languages in China			5	7	3	15	9.74
Modern Foreign Languages					4	4	2.60
Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Education	1	5	11	17	9	43	27.92
Foreign Language Research					1	1	0.65
Foreign Languages Research				1	2	3	1.95
Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages				2	1	3	1.95
Journal of Xi'an International Studies University					1	1	0.65
Total	4	22	49	42	37	154	100.00
Percent (%)	2.60	14.29	31.82	27.27	24.03	100.00	



### 3. Findings

Table 3. Research methods (1998-2019)

Research Method	1998-2001	2002-2005	2006-2009	2010-2013	2014-2019	Total	Percent (%)
Empirical studies		13	36	28	35	112	72.73
Theoretical research	4	9	13	14	2	42	27.27
Total	4	22	49	42	37	154	100.00
Percent (%)	2.60	14.29	31.82	27.27	24.03	100.00	

Empirical studies of LA were on the rise as a whole.

### 3. Findings

Research instruments  
mainly relied on  
questionnaires and  
interviews

Table 4. Frequency of research instruments in LA empirical studies

Instruments	Frequency	Percent (%)
questionnaire	95	84.82
interview	56	50.00
teaching experiment	29	25.89
test	10	8.93
classroom observation	6	5.36
learning journal	4	3.57
learning diary	1	0.89
learning contract	1	0.89
learning platform survey	1	0.89

### 3. Findings

Chinese LA research participants focused more on the undergraduates.

Table 5. Research participants of empirical studies (1998-2019)

Participants	2002- 2005	2006- 2009	2010- 2013	2014- 2019	Total	Percent (%)
Adults			1		1	0.89
English Teachers		2	2		4	3.57
Junior College Students	1	1			2	1.79
Middle School Students			1		1	0.89
Mixed Groups of Students	1				1	0.89
Postgraduates	1	2	2	2	7	6.25
Undergraduates	8	27	22	32	89	79.46
Undergraduates and English Teachers	2	4		1	7	6.25
Total	13	36	28	35	112	100.00
Percent (%)	11.61	32.14	25.00	31.25	100.00	

Note: Mixed groups of students=High School Students, Undergraduates, and Postgraduates



### 3. Findings

Table 6. Undergraduates' major distribution of empirical studies (1998-2019)

Major	2002- 2005	2006- 2009	2010- 2013	2014- 2019	Total	Percent (%)
English	1	5	2	8	16	16.67
English & Non- English	1	4	2	0	7	7.29
Non-English	8	22	18	25	73	76.04
Total	10	31	22	33	96	100.00
Percent (%)	10.42	32.29	22.92	34.38	100.00	

Non-English majors were in the spotlight.

### 3. Findings

The influencing factors of LA and LA platform/mode were the main focus.

Table 7. Research contents (1998-2019)

Research Content	1998-2001	2002-2005	2006-2009	2010-2013	2014-2019	Total	Percent (%)
Cultural Appropriateness	1		1	1		3	1.95
Study on the influencing factors of LA		10	20	18	18	66	42.86
Introduction to the LA research		1	1	2	1	5	3.25
LA platform/ mode	2	7	19	13	14	55	35.71
LA Scale				2		2	1.30
Teacher Autonomy			1	2		3	1.95
Teachers' Role			4		3	7	4.55
Cultivation of LA Ability	1	4	3	4	1	13	8.44
Total	4	22	49	42	37	154	100.00
Percent (%)	2.60	14.29	31.82	27.27	24.03	100.00	

### 3. Findings

Table 8. Influencing factors analysis of LA studies (1998-2019)

Factor analysis	2002- 2005	2006- 2009	2010- 2013	2014- 2019	Total	Percent (%)
Single factor analysis	4	15	12	12	43	58.90
Multi-factor analysis	6	9	6	9	30	41.10
Total	10	24	18	21	73	100.00
Percent (%)	13.70	32.88	24.66	28.77	100.00	

Single factor analysis was predominant.



### 3. Findings

Table 9. High-frequency of LA related influence factors (1998-2019)

Factors	Frequency	Percent (%)
Learning strategies	25	36.23
Motivation	16	23.19
English proficiency	11	15.94
Teachers' role	9	13.04
Self-efficacy	8	11.59

learning strategies and motivation were the most frequently examined factors affecting learners' autonomy, followed by English proficiency, teachers' role, and self-efficacy.

## 4. Conclusions

1

Most LA research participants were undergraduates, there were not many surveys aimed at teacher participants.

2

Empirical studies of LA showed an upward trend as a whole, while the instruments mainly relied on questionnaires and interviews.

3

Single factor analysis accounted for a large proportion of the influencing factors of LA.



## 4. Conclusions

Teachers should also be important participants.

A

**Go deep into** the classroom to make real observations.

B

**Empirical analysis** on the internal and external influencing factors of LA is needed.

C

Future Research



# **A Review of Research on Learner Autonomy over the Past 20 Years in China**

Nanyun Li<sup>1,2</sup> and Hyesook Park<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kunsan National University, Korea, <sup>2</sup>Jiujiang University, China

# Thanks!