

Beyond Metanarratives and Universal Ideologies: Exploring Postmodernist Educational Concepts for Autonomy in Iranian EFL Context

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ABSTRACT

Postmodernism represents skepticism toward metanarratives and universal ideologies that dominated the modernist era. The study focuses on three key postmodernist concepts - alternative assessment, process syllabi, and self-directed learning. Alternative assessment emphasizes evaluating the learning process over summative testing. Process syllabi focus on the learning experience rather than rigid outcomes. Self-directed learning enables student responsibility in setting learning goals and processes. This paper examined the effects of postmodernist educational concepts on improving Iranian EFL learners' autonomy. A quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design was utilized with 60 intermediate level Iranian EFL students divided into an experimental and control group (n=30 each). The experimental group received instruction utilizing the three postmodernist concepts over 14 weeks, while the control group received traditional modernist instruction. Autonomy was measured using a validated questionnaire before and after the intervention. The results showed the experimental group demonstrated significant increases in autonomy compared to the control group. Paired sample t-tests revealed significant differences between pre-test and post-test autonomy for the experimental group across all three postmodern concepts - alternative assessment, process syllabi, and self-directed learning. This suggests postmodernist concepts that decentralize instruction and emphasize student process over outcomes can enhance Iranian EFL learners' self-direction and responsibility for language acquisition. The study implies EFL syllabus designers and instruction should transition to postmodern models centered on individualized assessment, flexible syllabi, and student-guided learning to boost autonomy. Further research can expand sample sizes and explore additional postmodernist concepts across diverse demographics.

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Introduction

Over recent decades, the concept of postmodernism has emerged as a significant topic of debate. Numerous scholars have critically examined and often opposed postmodernist thought. For example, Kirby (2006) views the postmodern era as a form of pseudo-modernism, signifying a return to modernist principles, yet lacking in substance. Kirby (2006) asserts that postmodernism is obsolete and irrelevant. Similarly, Chomsky (1996) argues that postmodernism is devoid of meaningful contribution to our analytical or empirical understanding. Chomsky (1996) labels postmodernists as impostors and suggests that their theories could potentially benefit the developing world. He emphasizes the need for the involvement of serious intellectuals in the challenges faced by these regions, rather than dwelling on postmodernist fallacies. Furthermore, Guattari (1984, as referenced in Bazargani & Larsari, 2015) critiques postmodernist perspectives for their inability to simultaneously consider psychological, social, and environmental factors in their analyses. In summary, critics view postmodernism as an ambiguous collection of concepts that span various fields such as art, architecture, social sciences, and philosophy, without a clear definition or purpose (Sokal & Bricmont, 1998, 182). The exploration of postmodernist educational concepts for autonomy in EFL context involves a departure from traditional metanarratives and universal ideologies in education. Postmodernism challenges the idea of a single, overarching narrative or ideology that guides education and instead emphasizes the importance of diversity, multiple perspectives, and individual autonomy. In the context of Iranian EFL education, this approach can have significant implications for curriculum design, teaching methods, and the overall educational experience (Larsari & Wildová, 2022).

The concept of postmodernism in education challenges the conventional, often rigid frameworks of teaching, advocating for a more fluid and student-centric approach. This paradigm shift is crucial in understanding the evolving nature of educational methodologies, particularly in the domain of language learning. In the context of EFL, where learner autonomy and engagement play pivotal roles, the application of postmodernist ideas can potentially lead to more effective and personalized learning experiences (Larsari & Wildová, 2022).

In the realm of education, independent and self-directed skill acquisition has long been a subject of significant interest among educators. Autonomous learning involves various factors, but two crucial elements are the individual's willingness to learn and their capacity to take responsibility for their learning tasks. According to Daunwong (2007), these elements are closely linked to metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive experiences. He references the work of Fleming and Walls (1998), who argue that metacognitive knowledge equips learners with the skills to plan, monitor, manage, and reflect on their language learning process. Additionally, Dafei (2007) examined the correlation between learner autonomy and language acquisition, concluding that learner autonomy has a notable impact on students' proficiency. Within educational contexts, the

concept of autonomy has garnered significant attention, as it is considered a crucial attribute for enhancing the learning process.

According to Little (1991), autonomy can be defined as the ability to detach oneself from external influences, engage in critical thinking, make decisions, and take independent actions. This capacity for autonomy is demonstrated not only in how a learner acquires knowledge but also in how they apply what they have learned to broader contexts. To gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics of autonomous learners during the learning process, it is essential to explore various definitions and facets of learner autonomy.

The initial definition put forth by Holec describes autonomy as “the capacity to assume control over one's own learning” (cited in Little, 2006, 1). As mentioned by Benson (1997), autonomy can manifest in five distinct contexts. Firstly, it is applicable when learners engage in independent study. Secondly, it pertains to the skills and capabilities required for self-directed learning. The third context relates to innate abilities that are often constrained by formal education systems. The fourth scenario involves fostering a sense of responsibility for one's independent learning. Lastly, it encompasses the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning and evaluate their own progress. Little (1991) felt that “learner autonomy does not mean that the teacher becomes redundant, abdicating his/her control over what is transpiring in the language learning process” (Little, 1991, 4).

To this end, the present paper provides an in-depth analysis of postmodernism's principles and their applicability in the Iranian EFL setting. It discussed the potential for these concepts to empower learners, encouraging a more active and autonomous role in their language acquisition journey. The structure of the paper encompasses a review of relevant literature, an outline of the research methodology employed, followed by a detailed examination of the findings and their implications. The goal is to offer insights and practical recommendations for incorporating postmodernist ideas into EFL teaching practices, ultimately enhancing the learning experience for Iranian EFL students. Therefore, the aim of the study is to explore whether modernism concepts and postmodernism concepts to Iranian intermediate EFL learners has any influence on improving their learner autonomy or not. Sequel to the above, the following research questions were raised to guide this study:

RQ1: *To what extent does the implementation of alternative assessment as a postmodernist educational concept have a statistically significant impact on enhancing the autonomy of Iranian EFL learners?*

RQ2: *To what degree does the utilization of process syllabi as postmodernist educational concepts statistically contribute to the improvement of Iranian EFL learner autonomy?*

RQ3: *Is there a statistically significant effect on the enhancement of Iranian EFL learner autonomy when employing student autonomy (self-directed learning) as a postmodernist educational concept?*

1. Literature Review

1.1 Concept of Postmodernism

Postmodernism, a movement that emerged in the mid-20th century, is characterized by its departure from the positivist and structuralist traditions that defined the modernist era. It represents a complex and multifaceted shift in thought across various disciplines, including literature, art, philosophy, and social theory. Postmodernism represents a philosophical and cultural shift that emerged as a reaction to modernism, challenging its foundational principles and universal narratives (Lyotard, 1984). Characterized by its skepticism towards grand narratives and absolute truths, postmodernism advocates for the recognition of diverse perspectives and localized contexts (Hassan, 1985). Central to postmodern thought is the idea of decentralization. Unlike modernism, which often sought singular, overarching explanations, postmodernism embraces the complexity and plurality of human experience (Derrida, 1978). This notion extends to knowledge and truth, where postmodernism argues against the existence of an objective, universal truth, instead positing that truths are socially constructed and vary across cultures (Foucault, 1980). In the realm of education, postmodernism has significantly influenced pedagogical approaches. It challenges the traditional, standardized methods of teaching and learning, advocating for a more flexible, student-centered approach that acknowledges and adapts to the diversity of learners' backgrounds and experiences (Giroux, 1992). This perspective emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills, encouraging students to question and deconstruct established norms and narratives (Freire, 1970).

1.2 Three Trends of Postmodernism

1.2.1 Literature and Arts

In literature and the arts, postmodernism is often marked by its departure from linear narratives, a blending of genres, and a challenge to the traditional boundaries of form and content (Hutcheon, 2003). Linda Hutcheon's "*A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*" (2003) provides a comprehensive analysis of this aspect. She argues that postmodern literature typically engages in a paradoxical relationship with its modernist predecessor, both critiquing and building upon its foundations.

Roland Barthes's "*The Death of the Author*" (1967) is pivotal in understanding the postmodern approach to text and authorship. Barthes posits that the meaning of a text does not reside with its author but with the reader, thus decentralizing the role of the author and emphasizing the role of the reader in the creation of meaning. The interplay of reality and fiction, a hallmark of postmodern literature, is well exemplified in Umberto Eco's "*The Name of the Rose*" (1980). Eco's novel not

only employs metafictional techniques but also incorporates semiotic theory, thereby embodying the postmodern fascination with signs and symbols.

1.2.2 Philosophy

The second dimension within the realm of post-modernism has its roots in philosophy. During the 1970s, a group of French philosophers grew disenchanted with the tumultuous late 1960s when Western Europe and the United States were embroiled in political upheaval. Briefly in 1968, there appeared to be a significant potential for substantial political transformations across the Western world, driven by the actions of students, labor unions, anti-Vietnam war activists, progressive Communists, and militant Socialists. However, this optimism faded, particularly in France, where the struggle was most intense. It resulted in a decline in the once-significant influence held by the large Communist Party, to which many of these intellectuals were affiliated. This disenchantment led to their withdrawal from politics and a growing skepticism towards grand theories like Marxism, which they believed attempted but ultimately failed to elucidate the complexities of social reality. Instead, they began to develop ideas that aligned with the themes explored by contemporary artists.

Despite their numerous differences in perspective, these thinkers underscored the fragmented and diverse nature of reality. They also rejected the idea that human cognition could attain an entirely objective understanding of this reality. Any ideology or social theory that sought to rationalize human efforts towards progress or societal order was dismissed as devoid of meaning. They contended that the once-prevailing grand social theories or narratives that justified human actions, whether they were Marxism, liberalism, or Fascism, had lost their credibility. They argued that there are no universal truths, and these theories had historically served to legitimize the authority of those in knowledge while disempowering those who lacked it.

In philosophy and social theory, postmodernism is often associated with a critique of universalizing theories and ideologies. This critique emphasizes the contextuality of knowledge and the situatedness of truth. Jean Baudrillard's "Simulacra and Simulation" (1981) explores the relationships between reality, symbols, and society, especially in the context of media and technology. Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality, where the distinction between the real and the simulated blurs, has been influential in understanding postmodern culture. Judith Butler, in "Gender Trouble" (1990), demonstrates postmodern approaches to identity and social constructs. Butler's concept of gender performativity challenged the notion of gender as a stable and coherent identity, aligning with postmodernism's skepticism towards fixed categories and identities.

1.2.3 New Times

Thirdly, these two trends, observed in both the realms of art and philosophy, appeared to mirror the shifts occurring in the broader social landscape. Many, particularly within the British Left, perceived a phenomenon they referred to as 'New Times.' At the core of these 'New Times' lay the

transition from the traditional mass production model epitomized by Fordism to a more adaptable post-Fordist framework centered around computers, information technology, and robotics. In a 1981 edition of *Marxism Today*, it was articulated that our world was undergoing a profound transformation. The decline of mass production, mass consumerism, the dominance of big cities, the expansive presence of the surveillance state, extensive housing estates, and the nation-state was noted, while qualities such as flexibility, diversity, differentiation, mobility, communication, decentralization, and internationalization were seen as on the rise. As this transition unfolded, our own identities, self-perceptions, and subjectivities were undergoing a metamorphosis. We found ourselves amid a shift towards a new era, as described by Callinicos in 1989. Many acknowledged that we were indeed living in a markedly different society compared to just a few years prior. However, the precise nature of this society remained a subject of inquiry, with various theories already proposed, some of which you may be familiar with (Larsari, 2022).

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The main objective of this research is to examine the effect of three postmodernist educational concepts including *alternative assessment*, *process syllabi*, and *self-directed learning* (i.e. the independent variables of the study) on the students' autonomy (i.e. the dependent variable of the study). In this regard, this research employed a quasi-experimental design comprising two classes in private English Language institute in Iran. Mackey and Gass (2005) pointed out that, in the quasi-experimental studies, the researchers try to determine a cause-and-effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables. They explained that, in these studies the researchers are not able to randomly select the participants and assign them to the groups of the study. That is, they select a non-random sample of the target population. As they concluded, based on the nature of the data, the researchers employ parametric or non-parametric tests to analyze the collected data. In this study, two intact classes were allocated as experimental and control groups. Both groups underwent a pre-test using the autonomy questionnaire before the start of the experiment and a post-test following the intervention.

2.2 Participants

The study's participants were drawn from a group of male tenth-grade students, aged between fourteen and fifteen, enrolled in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses at three English Language institutions in Iran, during the 2022 winter semester. From a total of 120 sixth-grade students, 60 at the intermediate level were selected based on their performance in the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). All students had completed the Oxford placement test before starting the course, with scores ranging from 31 to 50, aligning with the intermediate level as per the Oxford test's score interpretation guidelines. The research employed convenience sampling as its method for selecting participants. Then, the researcher organized the participants into two distinct groups,

consisting of 30 individuals each. The control group (n=30) received conventional instruction based on modernist educational concepts, while the experimental group (n=30) was exposed to pedagogical approaches grounded in postmodernist concepts.

2.3 Materials and Instruments

2.3.1 Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

In this study, the researcher utilized the Oxford Placement Test to evaluate the general language abilities of students at the outset. This assessment was crucial to confirm the uniformity of the participants' skills. The test's scoring system divides candidates into four categories based on their English proficiency: elementary (scores ranging from 0 to 20), pre-intermediate (21-30), intermediate (31-44), and upper intermediate (45-50). This well-established test is recognized for its validity, and its reliability has been substantiated in several studies, such as those by Geranpayeh (2003) and Jones (2000). In this specific research, the test's reliability was confirmed through the Kuder-Richardson 21 formula, yielding a high score of 0.85.

Table 1. *Interpreting Scores for Oxford Placement Test (OQPT)*

Test	Total	Elementary	Pre-Intermediate	Intermediate
Grammar & Vocabulary	50	0-20	31-44	*31+

Based on Table 1, only those who scored within the 31 to 50 range were chosen for inclusion. Out of 120 students assessed, 60 were ultimately selected for the study.

3.3.2 Alternative Assessment

Alternative assessment refers to “various types of assessment procedures that are seen as alternatives or complements to traditional standardized testing. These procedures include self-assessment, peer- assessment, portfolios, learner diaries or journals, student-teacher conferences, interviews, and observation” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, 23). In the present study, the researcher employed *self-assessment* as a postmodernist educational concept of alternative assessment. More specifically, she asked each of the participants of the experimental group to assess their performances on the various tasks of the classroom by means of self-assessment sheets (which involved the grading scales for the tasks) and give the completed grading sheets to the researcher. In this way, the researcher tried to improve the language learners' self-confidence and autonomy in the classroom.

2.3.3 Process Syllabi

Process syllabi refer to the syllabi which “specify the learning experiences and processes students will encounter during a course, rather than, the learning outcomes. In these syllabi, teachers conduct classrooms discussions in which learners learn to listen to others as well as express their own views” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, 461). In the present study, the researcher employed group discussions as a postmodernist educational concept. In these discussions, the learners of the

experimental group were encouraged to express their own ideas regarding the relevant topic and to listen to the ideas expressed by the other group members. The researcher tried to enhance these learners' autonomy by means of these discussions.

2.3.4 Self-Directed Learning

In language teaching, *self-directed learning* refers to the kind of instruction in which learners are encouraged to be "responsible for decisions concerning goals, learning processes and implementation of their language learning needs" (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, 44). In the present study, the researcher employed learners' decisions as a postmodernist educational concept. More specifically, the researcher encouraged the language learners to determine certain learning goals regarding the various skills and aspects of the language in the classroom tasks. Moreover, she asked them to specify the learning processes of the tasks in the form of learner roles and responsibilities. Finally, she asked them to adapt the language tasks of the classroom based on their relevant language learning needs. The researcher endeavored to improve the learners' autonomy by means of these decisions.

2.3.5 Learner Autonomy Questionnaire as a Pretest and a Posttest

Claimed to have high reliability, the questionnaire was developed by Deng Dafei, (2007). The researchers specified that the questionnaire utilized in the study was originally created and crafted by Zhang and Li (2004). This questionnaire comprises two sections: the first section consists of 11 items measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), while the second section contains 10 items presented in a multiple-choice format. The purpose of this autonomy questionnaire is to evaluate the level of learner autonomy following the administration of the OQPT test. The researcher of the present study employed this questionnaire as a pretest before the beginning of the treatment of the study. Moreover, she used it as a posttest after the end of the treatment of the study. The reason for the researcher to prefer this questionnaire was that among scholars, measure the current perspective of the students about their degree of autonomy, while teaching English, this questionnaire seemed to be the most appropriate one.

2.4 Data Collection Procedures

Over the course of this present study, the data was collected through a pre-test, and post-test of learner autonomy questionnaire. The length of the study was 14 sessions of 90 minutes twice a week in which the tenth session devoted to mid-term exam and the last session to final exam. Therefore, the participants in each group received 18 sessions of instruction.

At the beginning of the study, 120 learners of intermediate level at three English Language institutions in Iran, during the 2022 winter semester. From a total of 120 sixth-grade students, 60 at the intermediate level were selected based on their performance in the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). All students had completed the Oxford placement test before starting the course, with scores ranging from 31 to 50, aligning with the intermediate level as per the Oxford test's

score interpretation guidelines. The research employed convenience sampling as its method for selecting participants. Then, the researcher divided them into two groups. One experimental group and one control group; each group included 30 participants. Control group (n=30) usual teaching through *modernist concepts*, whereas experimental group (n=30) was exposed to *postmodernist concepts*. Prior to distributing the learner autonomy questionnaire, participants were given a clear explanation that completing the questionnaire was entirely voluntary. They were also provided with a comprehensive understanding of the questionnaire's purpose and the process involved in its completion. Participants were reassured that their responses would solely be used for research purposes and that they had the option to receive feedback on their personality traits based on their questionnaire responses. Furthermore, any uncertainties or misunderstandings regarding the questionnaire were addressed by the researcher. Subsequently, a pre-learner autonomy questionnaire was administered to the students before the instructional interventions commenced. The objective of this learner autonomy assessment was twofold: firstly, to evaluate the degree of autonomy exhibited by participants in their English as a foreign language learning, and secondly, to gauge their individual levels of autonomy.

From the second session on, the regular class teaching syllabus contained a teaching and practicing section of the concepts of modernist and postmodernist for at least 14 consequent sessions. That is to say, the researcher taught the concepts of modernist and postmodernist for both the experimental group and the control group. That is, the researcher employed *self-assessment* as a form of *alternative assessment* postmodernist educational concept. More specifically, she asked each of the participants of the experimental group to assess their performances on the various tasks of the classroom by means of self-assessment sheets (which involved the grading scales for the tasks) and give the completed grading sheets to the researcher. In this way, the researcher tried to improve the language learners' self-confidence and autonomy in the classroom. Furthermore, the researcher employed *group discussions* as a form of *process syllabi* postmodernist educational concept. In these discussions, the learners of the experimental group were encouraged to express their own ideas regarding the relevant topic and to listen to the ideas expressed by the other group members. The researcher tried to enhance these learners' autonomy by means if these discussions.

Finally, the researcher employed *learners' decisions* as a form of *self-directed learning* postmodernist educational concept. More specifically, the researcher encouraged the language learners to determine certain learning goals regarding the various skills and aspects of the language in the classroom tasks. Moreover, she asked them to specify the learning processes of the tasks in the form of learner roles and responsibilities. Finally, she asked them to adapt the language tasks of the classroom based on their relevant language learning needs. The researcher endeavored to improve the learners' autonomy by means of these decisions. Here is teaching the concepts of modernist and postmodernist as follows:

Table 2. *Modernist and Postmodernist Concepts (Adopted from Finch, 2006)*

Modern metanarratives	Postmodern metanarratives
High-stakes, standardized testing (Absolute measurement; focus on the product of learning)	Classroom-Based Assessment using portfolios, journals, formative self- and peer-assessment (Relativistic focus on process; deconstruction of the standardized testing paradigm)
Structural syllabi (Totalization)	Process syllabi, task-based and project-based learning (Deconstruction of propositional language learning concepts)
Teacher-controlled learning (Totalization)	Student autonomy, self-directed learning (Decentralization, regionalism)

At the conclusion of the academic term, the researcher administered the same learner autonomy questionnaire as a posttest to both the modernist and postmodernist instructional groups. This assessment aimed to determine which class, whether following modernist or postmodernist teaching approaches, exhibited a higher level of autonomy.

2.5 Data Analysis

Based on the aims of the study, the researcher used the t-test (which is a parametric test) to analyze the collected data of the study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

3.1.1 First Research Question

The first research question in this study was: To what extent does the implementation of alternative assessment as a postmodernist educational concept have a statistically significant impact on enhancing the autonomy of Iranian EFL learners? To address this research inquiry, the researcher compared the performances of the experimental group on the autonomy pretest and alternative assessment posttest. These results are provided in Table 3:

Table 3. *Comparison between the Performances of the Experimental Group on the Autonomy Pretest and Alternative Assessment Posttest*

Tests	Mean	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	65.93	30	3.859
Alternative Assessment	72.91	30	2.212

To determine the difference between the performances of this group, the researcher used a paired-samples t-test. The results of this test are provided in Table 4:

Table 4. Paired Samples T-Test of the Performances of the Experimental Group on the Autonomy Pretest and Alternative Assessment Posttest

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pretest – Alternative Assessment	-7.000	4.778	.872	-8.784	-5.216	-8.025	29	.000

According to Table 3, there was a significant difference between the performance of the experimental group on the autonomy pretest and the alternative assessment posttest, since the p-value .000 (marked as *Sig.*) was less than the level of significance .05.

3.1.2 Second Research Question

The second research question in this study was: *To what degree does the utilization of process syllabi as postmodernist educational concepts statistically contribute to the improvement of Iranian EFL learner autonomy?* To address this research inquiry, the researcher compared the performances of the experimental group on the autonomy pretest and process syllabi post-test. These results are provided in Table 5:

Table 5. Comparison between the Performances of the Experimental Group on the Autonomy Pretest and Process Syllabi Posttest

Tests	Mean	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	65.93	30	3.859
Process Syllabi	74.60	30	2.238

To determine the difference between the performances of this group, the researcher used a paired samples t-test. The results of this test are provided in Table 6:

Table 6. Paired Samples T-Test of the Performances of the Experimental Group on the Autonomy Pretest and Process Syllabi Posttest

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pretest – Process Syllabi	-8.667	4.901	.895	-10.497	-6.836	-9.685	29	.000

According to Table 5, there was a significant difference between the performance of the experimental group on the autonomy pretest and process syllabi posttest, since the p-value .000 (marked as *Sig.*) was less than the level of significance .05.

3.1.3 Third Research Question

The Third research question in this study was: *Is there a statistically significant effect on the enhancement of Iranian EFL learner autonomy when employing student autonomy (self-directed learning) as a postmodernist educational concept?* To address this research inquiry, the researcher compared the performances of the experimental group on the autonomy pretest and self-directed learning post-test. These results are provided in Table 7:

Table 7. Comparison between the Performances of the Experimental Group on the Autonomy Pretest and Self-Directed Learning Posttest

Tests	Mean	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	65.93	30	3.859
Self-Directed Learning	75.42	30	3.126

To determine the difference between the performances of this group, the researcher used a paired-samples t-test. The results of this test are provided in Table 8:

Table 8. Paired Samples T-Test of the Performances of the Experimental Group on the Autonomy Pretest and Self-Directed Learning Posttest

	Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower				Upper
Pretest – Self-Directed Learning	-9.500	4.408	.805	-11.146	-7.854	-11.804	29	.000

According to Table 8, there was a significant difference between the performances of the experimental group on the autonomy pretest and self-directed learning posttest, since the p-value .000 (marked as *Sig.*) was less than the level of significance .05.

4. Discussion

The first, the second, and the third research questions of the study respectively examined the effects of alternative assessment, process syllabi, and self-directed learning as postmodernism educational concepts on improving Iranian EFL learner's autonomy. The results of the study showed that, all these postmodernism educational concepts had a significant positive impact on the participants' autonomy in second language classrooms. These results are in line with the results of the studies by Kucuroglu (2000). Nonetheless, they do not support the results of the study by Chan (2000). Finch (2006) noted that, postmodern educational concepts including self-assessment, process syllabi, and self-directed learning may be more efficient in comparison with the traditional approaches due largely to their focus on the importance of language learner in the context of the

classroom. As he explained, the traditional approaches were mainly teacher-centered and disregarded the predominant role of learner discovery in language learning. More specifically, in these approaches, the learners were not involved in the process of language acquisition and were only the passive recipients of the target language knowledge which was provided by the teacher. He pointed out that, in the postmodern educational concepts, the language learners are involved in the process of their learning and assume responsibility for it. Similarly, Giddens (1990) noted that, since the postmodern concepts evaluate the performance of the learners as a whole and value their efforts during language acquisition, they increase the learners' intrinsic motivation in the classroom. Finally, as Duignan (2004) pointed out, the postmodern concepts enable the learners to individualize the second language instruction and learn it at their own pace and by means of their individual strategies. Therefore, it can be noted that, in this study, all of the postmodernism educational concepts had a significant positive impact on the participants' autonomy since they: 1) focused on the importance of language learner in the context of the classroom; 2) involved the learners in the process of their learning; 3) evaluated the performance of the learners as a whole; and 4) enabled the learners to individualize the second language acquisition.

5. Conclusion and Implications

In the current research, we investigated the influence of three postmodernist educational concepts, namely alternative assessment, process syllabi, and self-directed learning, on enhancing the autonomy of Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Additionally, our study aimed to explore the interrelationships among these postmodernist educational concepts in the context of improving autonomy among Iranian EFL learners. Finally, we sought to compare the impact of postmodernist educational concepts with that of traditional modernist approaches on the development of autonomy in Iranian EFL learners. The findings of our study indicated the following outcomes: a) all these postmodernist educational concepts significantly and positively contributed to enhancing the autonomy of participants within second language classrooms; b) noteworthy correlations were identified among these postmodernist concepts; and c) the postmodernist educational concepts exhibited greater efficacy in fostering EFL learners' autonomy when compared to modernist approaches. It was argued that the EFL syllabus designers and teachers must endeavor to include alternative assessment techniques in the EFL classrooms to underline the fact that learning the target language is more important than passing a final achievement test. Nonetheless, it was noted that, the study was limited, and it was pointed out that, the future studies must deal with the issues which were not investigated in the present study. The future studies must investigate the usefulness of the postmodernist concepts in diverse educational settings including private language institutes. Furthermore, they must examine the various postmodernist concepts in the foreign and second language learning contexts. Moreover, they must deal with male and female learners and should examine the usefulness of these concepts at different

proficiency levels. Finally, they must deal with the role of the learners' age in the use of the postmodernist educational concepts. That is, they must control the learners' age to provide more information regarding the effectiveness of these concepts for different age groups.

5.1. The Pedagogical Implications of the Study

This part discusses the pedagogical implications of the study for the syllabus designers and teachers:

5.1.1 The Pedagogical Implications for EFL Syllabus Designers

The results of the study showed that, the postmodernist educational concepts had a positive impact on the language learners' autonomy in language learning. Based on these results, it can be argued that the EFL syllabus designers must modify their approaches to the development of the syllabi of the EFL language courses. More specifically, they must design the relevant syllabi based on the postmodern process-oriented approaches to language teaching, language assessment, and strategy training. For instance, they can provide the teachers with an opportunity to make use of portfolio assessment in the classroom. Similarly, they can include certain sections in the textbooks of the EFL courses in which the learners are trained to use certain strategies to learn the language inside and outside the classroom and to individualize their language learning. The use of these approaches may make the learners aware of the fact that their efforts in the process of second language acquisition in the classroom are valued. Moreover, it may underline the fact that the learners must take part in the language learning tasks of the classroom to get satisfactory grades in the course. Furthermore, it may enable the learners to be more independent regarding second language acquisition. All these issues may enhance the learners' autonomy in language learning.

5.2.2 The Pedagogical Implications for EFL Teachers

The language teachers may encounter various difficulties regarding the use of the postmodernist educational concepts in the classroom due to different kinds of practical considerations. Nonetheless, they can endeavor to include alternative assessment techniques in their classrooms to underline the fact that learning the target language is more important than passing a final achievement test. This issue may motivate the learners to try to enhance their second language competence and as a result may improve their autonomy in language learning. Moreover, the teachers must include strategy training in second language instruction. More specifically, the teachers must encourage the learners to enhance their self-directed language learning to improve their autonomy in the process of second language acquisition.

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