

FOSTERING LEARNER AUTONOMY THROUGH LEARNER TRAINING IN A THAI EFL CONTEXT

Chatrawee Intraboonsom

(chatrawee.in@mail.kmutt.ac.th)

King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand

Pornapit Darasawang

(pornapit.dar@kmutt.ac.th)

King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand

Hayo Reinders

(info@innovationinteaching.org)

King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand

Abstract

Learner autonomy has become an important educational goal, especially in language education. Despite this, little is known about how teachers go about developing learning autonomy in the classroom. This makes it difficult to determine the success or otherwise of such approaches. It is therefore interesting to investigate how teachers go about encouraging learner autonomy, especially in contexts where teachers are generally expected to be in control. This paper reports on an investigation into how teachers in one such context, at a large urban university in Thailand, foster learner autonomy in their classrooms. The classroom teaching practices of three teachers teaching English as a compulsory subject were explored through three classroom observations over a period of 10 weeks, which focused on the choices the teachers give to students and how they help their students learn. These were followed by semi-structured interviews to investigate teachers' reasons behind those practices. The results showed that teachers supported learner autonomy by both providing students with choices regarding classroom activities and assignments, and assisting the students in managing their learning by suggesting cognitive strategies and raising students' metacognitive knowledge.

1 Introduction

Learner autonomy has been the focus of language learning and in language educational context as it is perceived that becoming autonomous learners can lead to effective language learners (Benson, 2011; Onozawa, 2010). As a result, a number of research has been done to investigate and describe how to develop learner autonomy in a language classroom, which can be done through, for example, peer-teaching (Liu & Devitt, 2014), peer-assessment (Natri, 2007), portfolios (Dam, 2011; Tran & Duong, in press), reflection (Porto, 2007), reflective teaching (Qing, 2013), digital learning (Socket & Toffoli, 2012; Ting, 2015). The focus of such approach is to improve learners' ability to learn on their own. However, some learners are not able or not ready to develop this ability without help from a teacher (Yunus & Arshad, 2014) due to their lack of knowledge of how to learn on their own. Some learners do not know how to diagnose their own needs for learning, formulate their own learning objectives, identify learning resources and plan strategies for taking the initiative in using those resources, assess their own

learning, and have their assessments validated. It may not be possible to let learners to manage their learning on their own without helping them to be able to do so.

Teachers in a traditional classroom have the authority over students as they are the ones who decide, for example, what and how to learn, which classroom activities are used, when the activities should be done, when and how students' performance should be assessed. The authority to make these decisions are to be should be transferred to students when learner autonomy is promoted in a classroom. The teachers' roles are to help students learn how to take responsibility for their own learning by advising them to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning, amongst others. The teacher should offer opportunities and provide appropriate tools for students to practice these abilities in the classroom (Al-Asmari, 2013). In view of the necessity of developing learner autonomy, it is interesting to see how teachers in a university that advocates learner autonomy assist learners to be responsible for their own learning. Therefore, this study focuses on how EFL students in a Thai university context are supported to move toward learner autonomy.

2 Learner autonomy

Learner autonomy has been studied and promoted in language educational contexts over the past 30 years, however it is still ambiguous on what learner autonomy means, especially in language teaching and learning contexts. Basically, learner autonomy is based on the idea that learners are involved in managing their own learning. Benson (2011) defines it as "the capacity to take control of one's own learning" (p. 58). The capacity includes the ability to make decision to identify learning objectives, decide what and how to achieve those objectives, choose methods and techniques to be used, monitor the effectiveness of the learning process, and evaluate what has been learned. These aspects of learner autonomy are related to learners' freedom. Reinders (2010) emphasizes "learners are unable to 'take control' or make choices about their learning, unless they are free to do so" (p. 41). It can be seen that those scholars have emphasized the similar ideas of having learners concern with their own learning and the implementation of their own decisions.

Moreover, being autonomous learners, they must be motivated and willing to do so (Nunan & Richards, 2015). Learners who have the ability to make decisions for their learning may not be willing to do so and vice versa. Supporting this idea, Reinders (2011) identifies autonomous language learning as "an act of learning whereby motivated learners consciously make informed decisions about that learning" (p. 48). Therefore, to be successful autonomous learners, these two main components, ability and willingness, need to come together. However, becoming autonomous does not mean being independent from others. During the process of developing autonomy, learners generally work collaboratively and interactively with their peers and/or teachers (Cooker, 2013; Faltis, 2015; Murray, 2014). Most scholars suggested that encouraging students to work with peers can become a promising channel for them to learn.

Therefore, learner autonomy has been conceptualized in four dimensions: technical, political, psychological, and sociocultural dimensions (Benson, 2011). Technical dimension of autonomy is related to learning techniques or strategies used by learners. Political dimension of autonomy is related to freedom to learn and learners' control over their learning. Psychological dimension includes learners' desire and willingness to direct their learning, as well as learners' metacognitive knowledge which help them use metacognitive strategies effectively.

Sociocultural dimension of autonomy is drawn upon the idea that autonomous learning does not mean independence from teachers or other learners, but interdependence instead, meaning that learners' autonomy can be developed through social interactions with teachers and/or other learners.

Developing learner autonomy has then become a key concern in language classrooms as involving learners in making decisions of their learning process might increase their engagement and motivation to learn (Dörnyei, 2011). Learners, as a result, will be more focused in their learning and become successful learners (Ismael, 2015; Wong & Nunan, 2011). Therefore, it is essential to help learners to be able to make informed decisions and provide them the opportunity to practice taking control over their learning so that they can succeed in their learning throughout their lives.

3 Learner preparation for learner autonomy

Little (2015) asserts that promoting learner autonomy may be done in a language classroom in which teachers can help “learners to exercise agency – communicative, metacognitive, self-regulatory – through the target language” (p. 24). This is in line with the current study in that the classroom in this study was aimed to promote the use of the target language, therefore, integrating methods to help students learn through student-initiated tasks was vital. Accordingly, to integrate the development of learner autonomy into classroom practice, teachers will want to make the purposes clear so that learners can see the benefits and be motivated to take responsibility for their learning (Hernández, 2016). Thus far, it has been recognized that the role of the teacher to promote autonomy in the classroom could be one of the key components in fostering learner autonomy.

To foster learner autonomy, the teacher may not simply let students to do whatever they want to. Instead, the teacher should help students develop their abilities to take responsibility for their own learning process (Joshi, 2011; Scott, Furnell, Murphy, & Goulder, 2015). To promote learner autonomy, changing a teacher-centered classroom to learner-centered classroom is required (Dam, 2011). The teacher may support learner autonomy by minimizing the evaluative pressure in the classroom, maximizing learners' perceptions of having control of the teaching and learning activities in the classroom, as well as providing learners with a meaningful rationale for why learning activities are useful for them. Teacher role as a “source of information” is expected to be changed to roles as “counsellor and manager of learning resources” (Horváthová, 2016, p.125). Reinders (2010) suggested the stages of developing learner autonomy which can be done by letting and helping learners identify their learning needs, setting goals for their learning, determining learning plan, selecting resources and learning strategies to be used, finding ways to practice the language they have learned beyond the pedagogical environment, monitoring their own progress and revising their learning plans, and assessing what they have learned.

Several studies have been conducted to investigate teachers' views of how learner autonomy should be developed within a classroom context and students' views about and readiness for learner autonomy. Al-Asmari (2013) found that fostering learner autonomy should be integrated into teaching process by sharing the objectives, contents, and methodology of the course with students at the beginning of each session in order that students could understand the rationale behind the learning activities. Ting (2015) described the integration of using the

pedagogy of negotiated learning and school curriculum as the mean to develop students' autonomous learning. In this study, Ting argued that using negotiated learning could help learners to develop their autonomy by allowing them to take part in making decisions for their learning, such as choosing topics, choosing learning activities and tools, and deciding how to assess their progress. Students' perceptions on the roles of their own to manage their learning and their teachers' roles were investigated by Joshi (2011). The results showed that students perceived their role crucial in their own learning. However, the study of students' readiness for learner autonomy was conducted in Hong Kong by Chan (2001) illustrated that the students faced some difficulties becoming autonomous learners due to educational and behavioral norms. They relied on the teacher when it came to making decisions for their own learning. To overcome these difficulties in developing learner autonomy, she suggested that teacher should raise students' awareness of their role and their abilities in their learning process.

Although there are quite a few ideas of what and how teachers can do to promote learner autonomy, it would be interesting to investigate how these ideas are implemented in an actual classroom context. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) emphasize the limited attention of the research in exploring how teachers actually interpret and apply the notion of learner autonomy into their teaching practices. For this reason, they conducted the study to examine what learner autonomy meant to language teachers in Oman, and how these teachers described their actions to promote learner autonomy in their classrooms. The results of their study indicated that the teachers described a wide range of methods they employed to develop learners' autonomy, ranging from raising students' awareness to encouraging independent out of class language learning. To fill the gap between theory and practice, however, the actual classroom teaching practices should be observed to describe teachers' actions. This study was thus conducted to answer the question:

What do teachers of English do to encourage learner autonomy in their classrooms in a Thai university context?

4 Context of the study and participants

The present study was conducted in an urban Thai university in Bangkok, Thailand. At this particular university, the department of language studies has long had the development of learner autonomy as one of its main objectives. The three teachers who participated in the present study were teaching a compulsory first-year course called General English. The length of the course was 15 weeks (one semester). In this General English course, students were expected to develop both their four English language skills and their self-access learning skills. The students had to finish two main projects, one individually and the other one in a group, during the course. The students were also required to do two self-study assignments in their areas of interest, such as reading short stories, as well as to participate in one activity provided by the Self-Access Learning Centre.

To recruit teachers to participate in this study, all teachers who taught English for undergraduate students at the department of language study were asked to complete a questionnaire. A questionnaire developed by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), Joshi (2011) and Moomaw (2005) was adapted for this study who gauge the teachers' sense of autonomy. The teachers whose scores were interpreted as having a high sense of autonomy were then approached and later recruited with their consent. It was assumed that these teachers would be more active than their counterparts in their classroom practice when it comes to develop their students' autonomy.

The three participants consisted of two male and one female teachers with a range of teaching experience from 11 to 24 years. The table below represents the information of the three participants.

Table 1. Participants

Name (assigned)	Gender	Education	Years of teaching experience
Kamon	Male	Doctorate	11
Suda	Female	Masters	20
Narong	Male	Masters	24

5 Data collection methods and data analysis

Two data collection methods were employed: 1) classroom observations with observation field notes, and 2) semi-structured interviews. The participants were asked to identify three classes to be observed. These classroom observations focused on choices the teachers provided for students and how the teacher developed their students' ability to learn. This added up to a total of nine classroom observations. Each classroom observation lasted between 90 and 180 minutes depending on the participants' convenience. Based on the participants' preferences, six out of the nine observations were video recorded, whereas the other three were audio recorded.

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, one after each of the three observed classes and once after the semester ended. In these interviews, the teachers were asked to discuss how they encouraged learner autonomy in the classroom and the reasons for their practices. Each interview lasted between 20 to 40 minutes and it was conducted in Thai, with permission for audio-recording from each participant. The data obtained from both the teachers' semi-structured interviews and classroom observation recordings were transcribed and analyzed. Then all the data was translated into English.

To identify how the teachers support the students to take control of their own learning, the four dimensions of autonomy (Murase, 2015) were used to guide the analysis (i.e., the psychological, technical, political and social dimensions). The first aspect, psychological dimension, focuses on how the teachers support the students' development of metacognitive knowledge, and their use of affective strategies. Metacognitive knowledge is comprised of the knowledge about person, task, and strategy (Flavell, 1979). Oxford (2011) identifies two main categories of affective strategies, including strategies for: activating supportive emotions, beliefs, and attitudes, and generating and maintaining motivation. The second dimension of autonomy, technical dimension, looks at how the teachers help the students to develop their metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies. Oxford (ibid) suggests three sets of metacognitive strategies: paying attention to cognition, planning for cognition, obtain resources for cognition, organizing for cognition, implementing plan for cognition, orchestrating cognitive strategy use, monitoring cognition, and evaluating cognition. She also lists six sets of cognitive strategies which learners can use in order to tackle the task successfully. The six sets of cognitive strategies include using the senses to understand and remember, activating knowledge, reasoning, conceptualizing with details, conceptualizing broadly, going beyond the immediate data. The third dimension of

autonomy is a political dimension which is referred to the freedom and choices the teachers give to their students to determine aspects of students' own learning. For example, the teachers let students identify the objectives of a specific class, bring materials to be used in class, or have a say of how their learning should be evaluated. Lastly, the social dimension focuses on types of sociocultural-interactive strategies the teachers help their students develop. Social strategies include interacting to learn and communicate, overcoming knowledge gap in communicating, dealing with sociocultural contexts and identities (Oxford, *ibid*).

6 Findings and discussion

The classroom observations show that the participants consistently focused on three dimensions of autonomy throughout their classes in order to foster learner autonomy: psychological, technical, and political dimensions. For the psychological dimension, the participants focused on developing students' metacognitive knowledge, in terms of person knowledge and task knowledge. For the technical dimension of autonomy, the participants taught their students cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies. With regards to the political dimension, the participants gave their students choices on three components: working method and task, learning material, and who to work with. Names of teachers and their in-class practices of learner developing learner autonomy are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2. Practice of Developing for Learner Autonomy

Principles of learner autonomy		Kamon	Suda	Narong
Metacognitive knowledge	Person knowledge: knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses	✓		
	Task knowledge: knowing how to go about doing the task		✓	
Affective strategies	-			
Metacognitive strategies	Obtaining resources for cognition: finding resources	✓	✓	
	Monitoring cognition: monitoring cognitive performance during a task		✓	
	Evaluating cognitive progress and performance			✓
Cognitive strategies	Going beyond the immediate data: predicting		✓	✓
Sociocultural-interactive strategies	-			
Choices	Choice of working method, task type, and topic	✓		

	Choice of working companions	✓	✓	✓
	Choice of learning materials	✓		

6.1 Metacognitive knowledge

These two categories of metacognitive knowledge, person knowledge and task knowledge, were found to be of particular importance to the teacher participants. Kamon was found to focus on developing students' person knowledge. He aimed to help his students understand their own strengths and weaknesses in terms of their language proficiency levels. It was observed that he, first, asked his students to do the 1000 word vocabulary test (Nation, 2001). Next, he explained how this understanding of their own levels of vocabulary could help them when they choose graded reader books or choose exercises to practice on their own. Kamon said "the 1000 word test helps students gauge their level of English and this, in turn, would help them to efficiently learn by themselves" (Kamon, interview 4, turn 76).

Suda focused on another category of metacognitive knowledge: task knowledge. She raised her students' awareness of the task, more specifically, on how to go about doing the task. In one of the classroom observations, Suda mentioned "as a student, you need to know how to listen, there are many ways to listen. Don't just listen to try to understand all the details. It is like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Like this task, it only asks a few questions, so we will then focus on these few questions" (Suda, observation 1, turn 289). She explained that knowing how to do a specific task would help students achieve the purpose of the task. She said "we, as teachers, need to remind students what the focus of the task is, otherwise they may not do well or may not be able to complete the task" (Suda, interview 1, turn 64).

6.2 Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive strategies were found to be common practice to foster learner autonomy among the three participants. The areas of metacognitive strategies found in the classroom observations included a strategy of obtaining resources for cognition, monitoring cognitive performance during a task, and evaluating cognitive performance.

In two of the classroom observations, Suda was found supporting her students to use a strategy to find resources for their further use by teaching resourcing skill. Moreover, Suda also suggested how her students can use different resources to complete their assignments. For example, in one classroom activity, in which the students had to describe themselves, Suda showed her students how to Google using just the keywords from that particular task. She explained "I taught them how use keywords to focus their search for most likely helpful websites. I think, if the students do it often enough, they should be able to find ways to learn by themselves. But if I do not tell them to search for those websites to help them study, some of them will not do it" (Suda, interview 4, turn 8).

Kamon, unlike Suda, helped his students to find useful resources by introducing and then supporting his students to use the graded readers which are available at Self-Access Learning Centre. In classroom observations, he paid a lot of attention in helping the students to find the

right level of graded readers for themselves. For example, he showed the students examples of the content in a Level 1 and Level 4 book, then asked them to judge which book would help them expand their vocabulary. Kamon explained “students are given scores when they do a self-study at the SALC. So I think it would be beneficial for the students if they can choose an appropriate level of graded readers for themselves. The students not only get the scores for the self-study work, but also develop themselves in terms of both language proficiency and learning skills” (Kamon, interview 2, turn 22).

Another metacognitive strategy which was observed in the classroom was monitoring cognition. Suda raised her students’ awareness to monitor their cognitive performance by teaching the students how to do self-correction. She asked her students, and helped them, to find and correct mistakes in their written sentences. In her class, Suda showed them their written examples. First, she helped them identify some errors and correct them. She did that by providing some question prompts for checking and correcting their finished sentences. Then she asked the students to do it individually. She explained, “we would go through students’ assignments together to identify errors they had made. The students then would have to come up with the corrections themselves. If I correct their errors, they will not learn anything. It is better for the students to correct their errors so they can learn” (Suda, interview 1, turn 52). This point was further underscored by Suda explaining that raising students’ awareness about identifying and correcting their own mistakes may help develop students’ ability to monitor, evaluate, and then, improve their learning.

To develop the students’ metacognitive strategies, the classroom observations also showed that evaluating cognition was found to be important. Narong supported his students to evaluate cognitive progress and performance by developing their evaluation skills. Generally, after his students finished working, Narong asked his students to reflect on the tasks. For example, he asked his students to think about what they had learned from doing that activity and what made it difficult. He explained “reflecting on the task students had done would help them to become aware of their own language ability and what else needed to be improved” (Narong, interview 2, turn 48).

The above examples depict how aware these three teachers were of the need and benefits of becoming autonomous learners. Especially in Kamon’s and Suda’s classes, they are generally noticed that they integrated both metacognitive knowledge and language learning strategies at different stages of their teaching. This concurs with Anderson’s (2002) and Smith’s (2003) studies which emphasize that helping students develop metacognitive knowledge and skills is vital to develop their autonomy. Anderson highlights its importance as “when learners reflect upon their learning strategies, they become better prepared to make conscious decisions about what they can do to improve their learning. Strong metacognitive skills empower second language learners” (p. 5).

6.3 Cognitive strategies

During the classroom tasks and activities, the teachers were often seen explicitly stating the cognitive strategies their students could use to complete the tasks. Predicting strategy was either simply stated or demonstrated when students were working on their tasks. Suda and Narong often suggested strategies which helped students complete the task successfully.

Suda guided her students to use the strategy of making predictions of what the text was about. For her classroom dictations, before a recording was played, Suda was observed to be regularly drawing her student attention to the day's dictation. She posed questions about what the students knew about the topic and/or what they thought about it and/or what vocabulary would come up in the recordings. For example, in one of the classroom observations, Suda said "you are going to hear about the food and emotion, right? Can you predict ... when you take some hot and spicy food, how would you feel? Can you imagine?" (Suda, observation 1, turn 7). She explained "we are aware that our students have background knowledge, certain areas of that knowledge are shared. We, then, make use of that. We help them mentally prepare for the task", and added "they will be aware of what they have already known. Later on, when they perform other tasks or do something new, they can use this predicting strategy to help them comprehend the texts" (Suda, interview 1, turn 46).

Besides, both Suda and Narong also helped their students develop their predicting strategy by using contextual clues. They often suggested the students to use part of speech and subject-verb agreement. In dictations in the classroom, the students were handed a sheet of paper with an edited paragraph, having some words blanked out. Then, they were given a few minutes either to read or answer a few 'strategic' questions posed by the teacher. The students then listened to a recording and filled in missing words. In one classroom observation, Suda said "so, you can guess that it should be sweetness, instead of sweet, right? Because sweet is what? What kind of part of speech of sweet? ... It is an adjective, right? When you see 'the', you should know what part of speech should be used" (Suda, observation 1, turn 24). Likewise, in Narong's classes, he told his students to predict what they were about to hear before the recording of the dictation was played. In one of his classes, he mentioned "the passage is about Brazilian designer. And there are fifteen blanks. You can guess what words they should be. Think about the part of speech of the word in each blank. Should it be a noun, a verb, or an adjective? Try to guess first" (Narong, observation 3, turn 1). He explained the reason behind this by linking it to how the strategy can be used in real life, saying "before you start to listen or read, you generally assume or predict or guess what it is going to be" (Narong, interview 3, turn 40).

6.4 Choices

The classroom observations showed that Kamon was the only participant who helped his students develop learner autonomy by giving them choices. Students were allowed to make decisions on three components of their learning in the classroom: 1) choice of working method, task type, and topic, 2) choice of learning material, and 3) choice of selecting peers to work with.

Giving the students choices to work on their assignments were found in Kamon's classes. When assigning homework, he gave his students many choices: choice of working method, task type, and topic. In one classroom observation, he assigned his students non-graded homework of which the purpose was to have the students practice using language patterns they had learned, such as asking about nationalities, and describing their appearance and personalities. Kamon gave the students the choice between working individually or collaboratively with their friends. He also allowed his students to choose in which way they wanted to present their work: by doing a role play or by giving an individual presentation. Moreover, the students could choose topics that they wanted to work on for their homework. Kamon explained this by saying "because I already told them that they have to work on one assignment. This part is not

negotiable. So what I can offer them are those choices I gave them, such as topic so that they can choose a topic in the area of their interests” (Kamon, interview 3, turn 103).

In addition to giving his students choices on assignments, Kamon also gave the students a choice of learning material. He involved the students to supply word groups to be used in the classroom dictations. In two out of three classroom observations in Kamon’ classes, besides using his own list of words for the dictations, he asked the students to suggest some words to be used. By allowing the students to do that, on the one hand, Kamon was viewed as being partially transferring the ownership of learning to his students. He said “my students could suggest words to be used in our dictation because I want them to feel that they can have a say in our class activity” (Kamon, interview 2, turn 44).

Allowing the students to choose their working companions was found to be a common practice among the three teacher participants. In all classroom observations, the students had the chance to choose their work partner or group members when working in pairs or in groups in class. Narong found that having students doing their own pairing or grouping helped some low proficiency students to become engaged in the activities. By forming their own group, they would be comfortable enough to actively participate with their groups, and feel secure enough to participate with the support of their friends. Narong said “I can see that students work better when they work with someone whom they are willing to work with” (Narong, interview 1, turn 106).

The above results show that all the teachers agreed that offering students more choices to make decisions for their own learning in the classroom was one of the key practices to develop learner autonomy in language classrooms. Aebersold and Field (1997) describe the advantage of allowing students to have some control over the learning process over a period of time as it helps students to become more independent and self-reliant. They could be able to make decisions of their learning without being dependent on a teacher. However, Assor, Kaplan, and Roth’s (2002) study reports that when the teacher provides students choices without making students realize their personal goals and interests, students do not feel that those choices could contribute to their autonomy. Therefore, the teacher should have been aware of helping students relate goals and interests to choices they make. Moreover, letting the students work in pairs and in groups was one of the common practices among all three participants. To work with peers, the students could develop a lot of learning strategies (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001), as well as become less dependent on teachers (Dam, 2000).

Even though the participants integrated a range of principles of learner autonomy in their classroom teaching, two principles were not found in the classrooms, i.e., developing the students’ affective and sociocultural-interactive strategies. Lacking knowledge and awareness of when and how to use these two sets of strategies, students may have difficulties coping with emotional states they experience in their learning process and/or learning challenges they face in social interaction. They could even surrender control over their learning and let the teacher make decisions for them. However, this can be explained as incorporating the whole process of autonomous learning into every classroom lesson, especially in traditional classrooms, seems to be challenging (Onozawa, 2010). One of the limitations could be the education system in Thailand, which focuses on testing and does not leave much room for individual development. Teachers’ role is seen to be to help students pass the exam, so helping the students to become autonomous might not be their primary objective. Also the classroom observations were

conducted in only three out of 15 classes. It is possible that the participants may develop learner autonomy in the classes which are not observed.

7 Conclusion

The findings above demonstrate how Thai English language teachers integrate the concept of learner autonomy in their teaching to guide their students towards learner autonomy. Classroom observations provided an insight into a wide range of actions the teachers performed to encourage learner autonomy in their classroom teaching, including both psychological and methodological preparation. These practices of supporting learner autonomy include developing students' metacognitive knowledge, suggesting metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and giving them choices over their learning.

These results provide an understanding of how learner autonomy can be fostered in a traditional Thai context where decisions on teaching and learning processes almost wholly fall on teachers. Teachers, as a result, play an important role in the classroom when it comes to providing students opportunities to develop their autonomy. Becoming autonomous learners does not automatically happen. Students can become autonomous gradually if the teacher gives them an opportunity to practice it in a supported environment. However, developing learner autonomy is not synonymous with giving students complete freedom as they may not be able to determine the direction of their learning. Teaching students how to learn is as important as giving them freedom to learn. Students develop their sense of responsibility for their own learning, which then may enable them to become autonomous learners, when teachers provide opportunity for and help students in reflecting on their learning process. This study shows that it is possible to encourage learner autonomy, especially in a context where the teachers are expected to be in control, by both creating an environment where the students can practice control over aspects of their own learning and by preparing them to be able to make effective choices.

References

- Aebersold, J. A., & Field, M. L. (1997). *From reader to reading teacher: Issues and strategies for second language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Al Asmari, A. (2013). Practices and prospects of learner autonomy: Teachers' perception. *English Language Teaching*, 6(3), 1–10.
- Anderson, N.J. (2002). The role of metacognition in second language teaching and learning. *ERIC Digest, April 2002*, 3–4.
- Assor, A., Kaplan, H., & Roth, G. (2002). Choice is good but relevance is excellent: Autonomy affecting teacher behaviors that predict students' engagement in learning. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 72, 261–278.
- Benson, P. (2011). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning* (2nd ed.). London: Longman.
- Borg, S., & Al-Busaidi, S. (2012). Teachers' beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy. *ELT Journal*, 66(3), 283–292.
- Chan, V. (2001). Readiness for learner autonomy: What do our learners tell us? *Teaching in Higher Education*, 6(4), 505–518.
- Cooker, L. (2013). "When I got a person to communicate with, I got a purpose to learn": Evidence for social "modes of autonomy". *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 36(1), 29–49.

- Dam, L. (2000). Why focus on learning rather than teaching? From theory to practice. In D. Little, L. Dam & J. Timmer (Eds.), *Focus on learning rather than teaching: Why and how* (pp. 18-37). Dublin: Trinity College, Centre for Language and Communication Studies.
- Dam, L. (2011). Developing learner autonomy with school kids: Principles, practices, results. In D. Gardner (Ed.), *Fostering autonomy in language learning* (pp. 40-51). Gaziantep: Zirve University.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2011). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Faltis, C. (2015). Autonomous language learning when language is a social practice: Implications for teacher educators. *Verbum et Lingua*, 5, 57–64.
- Flavell, J.H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 34(10), 906–911.
- Horváthová, B. (2016). Development of learner autonomy. In Z. Straková (Ed.), *How to teach in higher education: Selected chapters* (pp. 120-136). ISBN 978-80-555-1655-4.
- Ismael, H. A. (2015). The role of metacognitive knowledge in enhancing learners autonomy. *International Journal of Language and Linguistic*, 2(4), 95–102.
- Jacobs, G. M., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2001). Paradigm shift: Understanding and implementing change in second language education. *TESL-EJ*, 5(1), 1–17.
- Joshi, K. R. (2011). Learner perceptions and teacher beliefs about learner autonomy in language learning. *Journal of NELTA*, 16(1-2), 12–29.
- Little, D. (2015) University language centres, self-access learning and learner autonomy. *Recherche et Pratiques Pédagogiques en Langues de Spécialité*, 34(1), 13–26.
- Liu, Q., & Chao, C. C. (2018). CALL from an ecological perspective: How a teacher perceives affordance and fosters learner agency in a technology-mediated language classroom. *ReCALL*, 30(1), 68–87.
- Moomaw, W. E. (2005). *Teacher-perceived autonomy: A construct validation of the teacher autonomy scale* (Doctoral dissertation, University of West Florida). Retrieved from www.political-thinker.com/know/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Moomaw_William_Edward_200512_EdD.pdf
- Murase, F. (2015). Measuring language learner autonomy: Problems and possibilities. In C. J. Everhard & L. Murphy (Eds.), *Assessment and autonomy in language learning* (pp. 35–63). New York: Palgrave.
- Murray, G. (Ed.), (2014). *Social dimensions of autonomy in language learning*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Natri, T. (2007). Active learnership in continuous self- and peer-evaluation. In A. Barfield & S.H. Brown (Eds.), *Reconstructing autonomy in language education: Inquiry and innovation* (pp. 108–120). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nunan, D., & Richards, J. (2015). Preface. In D. Nunan & J. Richards (Eds.), *Language learning beyond the classroom* (pp. xi–xvi). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Onozawa, C. (2010). Promoting autonomy in the language class: How autonomy can be applied in the language class. Retrieved from: <https://gair.media.gunma-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10087/7216/1/2010-onozawa1.pdf>
- Oxford, R. L. (2011). *Teaching and researching language learning strategies*. New York: Routledge.

- Porto, M. (2007). Learning diaries in the English as a foreign language classroom: A tool for accessing learners' perceptions of lessons and developing learner autonomy and reflection. *Foreign Language Annals*, 40(4), 672–696.
- Qing, X. U. (2013). Maximizing learner autonomy through reflective teaching. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 9(4), 19-22.
- Reinders, H. (2010). Towards a classroom pedagogy for learner autonomy: A framework of independent language learning skills. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 35, 40–55.
- Reinders, H. (2011). Towards an operationalisation of autonomy. In A. Ahmed, G. Cane, & M. Hanzala (Eds.), *Teaching English in multilingual contexts: Current challenges, future directions* (pp. 37–52). Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars.
- Scott, G. W., Furnell, J., Murphy, C. M., & Goulder, R. (2015). Teacher and student perceptions of the development of learner autonomy; a case study in the biological sciences. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(6), 945-956.
- Smith, R.C. (2003). Teacher education of teacher-learner autonomy. In J. Gollin et al. (Eds.), *Symposium for language teacher educators: Papers from three IALS symposia* (pp. 1–13). Edinburgh: IALS, University of Edinburgh. Retrieved from http://www.warwick.ac.uk/~elsdr/Teacher_autonomy.pdf
- Socket, G., & Toffoli, D. (2012). Beyond learner autonomy: A dynamic systems view of the informal learning of English in virtual online communities. *ReCALL*, 24(2), 138–151.
- Ting, Y. L. (2015). Tapping into students' digital literacy and designing negotiated learning to promote learner autonomy. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 26, 25–32.
- Tran, T. Q., & Duong, T. M. (in press). EFL learners' perceptions of factors influencing learner autonomy development, *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* (2018), Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2018.02.009>
- Wong, L., & Nunan, D. (2011). The learning styles and strategies of effective language learners. *System*, 39, 144–163.
- Yunus, M. M., & Arshad, N. D. M. (2014). ESL teachers' perceptions toward the practices and prospects of autonomous language learning. *Asian Social Science*, 11(2), 41.