

ผลของวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษแบบนำตนเองที่มุ่งเน้นการอ่านเอาเรื่องต่อความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองของนักศึกษาปริญญาโทสาขาบริหารธุรกิจ
The Effect of Self-Directed English Learning on Learner Autonomy
Development of MBA Students

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บทคัดย่อ

ความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองถือว่าเป็นเป้าหมายสำคัญสูงสุดของการศึกษาเนื่องจากนำไปสู่การเรียนรู้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพและการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิต ผู้เรียนจึงควรต้องได้รับการฝึกฝนให้พัฒนาคุณลักษณะดังกล่าวและการเรียนรู้แบบนำตนเอง (SDL) คือวิธีการหนึ่งในหลายๆวิธีการเรียนที่ตอบสนองเป้าหมายการศึกษาข้อนี้ได้ วัตถุประสงค์การวิจัยนี้คือ เพื่อตรวจสอบผลของวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษแบบนำตนเองที่มุ่งเน้นการอ่านเอาเรื่อง ต่อความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองและขนาดอิทธิพล ผลวิจัยคือ นักศึกษาปริญญาโทสาขาบริหารธุรกิจ (MBA) จำนวน 29 คน ที่มหาวิทยาลัยธุรกิจบัณฑิต กรุงเทพมหานคร ใช้วิธีการวิจัยเชิงผสมผสานแบบแผนรองรับภายในโดยใช้แบบสอบถามและแบบสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างในการเก็บข้อมูล แบบสอบถามเป็นมาตราส่วนประมาณค่า 5 อันดับและมี 53 ข้อ ประกอบด้วย 7 ด้าน คือ “ทัศนคติต่อความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง” “ความเต็มใจในการเรียน” “ความมั่นใจในการเรียน” “แรงจูงใจในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ” “ศักยภาพในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง” “กลยุทธ์การอ่านแบบปริชาน” และ “กลยุทธ์การอ่านแบบอภิปริชาน” ผลการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วย t-test แบบ dependent samples แสดงให้เห็นว่า โดยเฉลี่ยความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองของผลวิจัยก่อน SDL (ค่าเฉลี่ย 3.56 ค่าส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน 0.30) และหลัง SDL (ค่าเฉลี่ย 3.70 ค่าส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน 0.39) ไม่แตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ ($p > 0.05$) จึงไม่มีค่าขนาดอิทธิพล จากการตรวจสอบรายด้าน พบว่า ค่าเฉลี่ยของทุกด้านอยู่ในระดับสูง ยกเว้น ด้าน “ความมั่นใจในการเรียน” และ “กลยุทธ์การอ่านแบบปริชาน” ซึ่งอยู่ในระดับปานกลางบทความอภิปรายถึงนัยของข้อค้นพบและการนำผลวิจัยไปใช้ รวมทั้งข้อเสนอแนะสำหรับงานวิจัยต่อไป

คำสำคัญ : ภาษาอังกฤษ ความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง นักศึกษาปริญญาโทบริหารธุรกิจ การอ่านเอาเรื่อง การเรียนรู้แบบนำตนเอง

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Abstract

Learner autonomy is unanimously regarded as the utmost crucial pedagogical goal for education since it leads to effective and life-long learning. Learners, thus, should be trained to develop their autonomy, and self-directed learning (SDL) is one of the many approaches to fulfil this educational purpose. The objectives of this study were to investigate the effect of self-directed English learning focusing on reading comprehension on a development of learner autonomy of MBA students and its effect size. The subjects were 29 MBA students of Dhurakij Pundit University, Bangkok. The study took the form of an embedded mixed methods design using a questionnaire to collect quantitative data, and semi-structure interview to gather qualitative data. Having 7 domains, the 53 5-point Likert scale statements questionnaire composes of “attitudes towards learner autonomy”, “willingness to learn”, “self-confidence to learn”, “English learning motivation”, “capacity to learn autonomously”, “cognitive reading strategy”, and “metacognitive reading strategy”. Based on the dependent samples t-test, the findings revealed that, on average, learner autonomy of the subject students before the SDL ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.30$) and that after the SDL ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.39$) is not significantly different ($p > 0.05$). Consequently, there is no effect size. Investigating each learner autonomy domain, it was found that every domain is at a high level, except “self-confidence” and “cognitive reading strategies” which are at a moderate level. Implications and applications are discussed, and recommendations were provided for further research.

Keywords : English, learner autonomy, MBA students, reading comprehension, self-directed learning

1. Introduction

Language learning outside the classroom provides learners with more exposure to English, and it requires individual learners to take control over their own learning without a presence of a teacher. However, without this independent learning quality and effective self-regulatory strategies, students would not be able to benefit from outside class opportunities (Kormos & Csizer, 2014). It is argued that the development of such learning capacity is beneficial to language learning. This capacity can be developed by providing learners with opportunities to engage in modes of learning that aim at fostering learner autonomy through practices (Benson, 2001).

Besides an active role of learners in a learning process, learner autonomy development entails a crucial role of teachers who have an attempt and effort to foster learner autonomy. However, as pointed out by Benson, fostering autonomy does not imply any particular approach to practice or a particular way of organizing the process of teaching and learning, but any practice that aims to encourage or enable learners to take greater control of any aspect of their learning can be considered a means of promoting autonomy. Therefore, this study employed self-directed learning (SDL) as a means to develop learner autonomy.

2. Objectives of the Study

2.1 To investigate the effect of SDL on a development of learner autonomy of MBA students.

2.2 To study its effect size.

3. Research Questions

3.1 What is the effect of SDL on a development of learner autonomy of MBA students?

3.2 If so, how large is its effect size?

4. Hypothesis

A development of learner autonomy of MBA students will significantly increase after the SDL.

5. Review of Related Literature

5.1 Learner Autonomy

The term “learner autonomy” has been differently defined. Holec (1981: 3) defines it as ‘to take charge of one’s learning’ as ‘to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning’, that is, ‘determining the objectives; defining the contents and the progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly (rhythm, time, place, etc.); and evaluating what has been acquired’. Holec’s definition relates to metacognitive aspects but appears to be exclusive of cognitive dimensions. As autonomy involves many aspects; therefore, Benson (1997: 25) states that three basic definitions of language learning autonomy are described, i.e.: 1. autonomy as the act of learning on one’s own and the technical ability to do so; 2. autonomy as the internal psychological capacity to self-direct one’s own learning; 3. autonomy as control over the content and processes of one’s own learning.

Benson elaborates that the first two definitions imply some type of change while the third one relates to a political sense. Learner autonomy is an attribute of a learner’s approach to the learning process, and it cannot be taught but fostered, and there are several learning approaches to promote learner autonomy (Benson, 2011). The view of Benson on autonomy is in relation to the view of Little (1990) who demonstrates that learner autonomy is basically a psychological relation of the learner to the content and learning process. This can be recognized from varying learning behaviors. These behaviors are considered as a capacity to detach, perform critical reflection, make decision, and act independently.

5.2 Components of Learner Autonomy

It has been seen that autonomy involves learners’ “responsibility” to take charge of their own learning (Holec, 1981) and “ability” to do so

(Benson, 1997). Littlewood (1996) supports that such ability depends on knowledge about choices that have to be made from the alternatives, and necessary skills for exercising appropriate choices. He also argues for the importance of “willingness”. Learners cannot be autonomous relying only on their independent ability. Rather, they need to be willing to take responsibility for their own learning. Willingness to take responsibility for the choices required can be urged by motivation and confidence. Learners need to be motivated and feel confident to execute their learning on the autonomous basis. The notions of ‘ability’, ‘willingness’, and ‘motivation’ are central as the components of autonomy (Holec, 1981).

The ideas of “right” and “freedom” to learn also emerge and are considered crucial elements of learner autonomy. According to Lynch (2001: 390-391), right well reflects freedom to learn. Lynch points out that autonomy

“... is often described in terms of learners’ degree of freedom to select, practice and act within the confines of the language teaching instruction, rather than their capacity to continue to learn English in their daily interaction with the academic discourse community”.

Supported by Little (1990), although autonomy entails freedom, the difference lies in terms of degrees of freedom. Freedom of autonomous learners must be always constrained by dependence of the learners on support and cooperation with other people (Little, 1997). This demonstrates a social dimension of learner autonomy.

Little and Dam (1998) assert that freedom has a strong implication on learning since it can be freedom from the teacher’s control, from the curriculum’s constraints, or from being forced to learn. However, in their view it is the freedom from the learner’s self. Learners are capable of being more effective learners no matter what their innate

capacity is. It is crucial that each learner is empowered to develop his or her learner autonomy.

It is noticeable that the term ‘autonomy’ is dealt with various definitions; therefore, autonomy is semantically various and complex (Little & Dam, 1998). According to Benson (2011), autonomy refers to an attribute of a learner, and it can be developed in various modes of learning which more or less are self-directed (Benson, 2001: 110). Nonetheless, an assumption is that autonomy can be developed through participation in self-directed modes of learning.

In this study, learner autonomy refers to a capacity to take control of a student’s own learning of English by determining learning goals, selecting learning contents and reading materials, monitoring a learning procedure, and evaluating learning progress. Learner autonomy is fostered by SDL outside the classroom. SDL will be reviewed in the next section.

5.3 Self-Directed Learning (SDL)

The learner-centeredness perspectives which emphasize SDL grow largely from the ideas addressed by the scholars in the area from humanistic psychology (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1993). Carl Rogers advocates that all human beings have a tendency to move towards completion or fulfillment of potential (actualizing tendency). Individuals have the creative power within themselves to solve problems, change their self-concepts, and become increasingly self-directed. The individuals have the source of psychological growth and maturity within themselves.

Knowles (1975: 18) defines SDL as: “In its broadest meaning, ‘self-directed learning’ describes a process by which individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate

learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes”.

According to Guglielmino (1977: 73), characteristics of a highly self-directed learner are as follows: “... is one who exhibits initiative, independence, and persistence in learning; one who accepts responsibility for his or her own learning and views problems as challenges, not obstacles; one who is capable of self-discipline and has a high degree of curiosity; one who has a strong desire to learn or change and is self-confident; one who is able to use basic study skills, organize his or her time, set an appropriate pace for learning, and to develop a plan for completing work; one who enjoys learning and has a tendency to be goal-oriented”.

Likewise, Nunan and Lamb (1996) define self-directed learners as those who are able to make informed choices about what to learn and how to learn. Making informed choices requires knowledge and skill. Acquiring SDL skills is one of the major educational purposes, which will lead to life-long learning. Educators, therefore, need to help learners to develop attitudes that learning is a lifelong process (Knowles, 1976 cited in Williams & Burden, 1997). Helping language learners learn how to learn involves teaching learning strategies. As Oxford (1990) points out, language learning strategies promote greater overall self-direction for learners who know how and when to use strategies. Arguably, learning strategies need to be explicitly taught or trained.

In this study, SDL is the learning approach utilized to foster learner autonomy. Operationally, SDL refers to a practice of an independent learning of English outside the classroom of individual students. SDL requires them to practice reading English on a weekly basis for their better reading comprehension ability. To do so, they have to plan for a weekly short-term reading goal, read English materials of their own selection, summarize what

they read, reflect on their learning, and set a future plan.

It should be noted that this paper is a part of the research project that also aimed to investigate the effects of SDL on English reading comprehension ability of the MBA students. Elsewhere, it was found that, on average, English reading comprehension ability of the subject students before the SDL ($M = 12.30$ (out of 20), $SD = 2.76$), and that after the SDL ($M = 13.33$, $SD = 3.30$) is significantly different ($p = 0.02$). This means that, on average, English reading comprehension ability of the students in the post-test significantly increases from the pre-test.

6. Research Methodology

6.1 Subject

29 MBA students at Dhurakij Pundit University (DPU) were the subject. Among them, 26 were Thai, and 3 were Chinese. Females were triple male students, and they had mixed English proficiency. Their ages ranged from 23 to 42 years.

6.2 The Setting of the Study

The study took place at DPU located in Bangkok, Thailand which provides an MBA (Master of Business Administration) program with two majors, that is, Business Administration and ASEAN Business. The curriculum requires students who could not pass the standardized test, namely TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, or DPU-GET (the in-house test), at the level required by the program to take a foundation English for academic purposes course which focuses on English reading comprehension skills. The 3-credit course, based on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis, aims to improve reading and writing skills of the students. The first half of the course trains students on reading strategies and techniques, namely using an English dictionary, using context clues to guess unknown word meanings, pronoun referencing, skimming, and scanning. Prior to these lessons, English sentence structures are reviewed. After a development of English reading ability, writing skills

are then focalized during the second half of the course.

The class was run in the summer semester for 8 consecutive weeks from June to July, 2014. Students were required to attend a 3 hour class on Saturday and Sunday from 13.00-16.00.

Since the students' English proficiency was diverse and ranged from basic to pre-intermediate levels, the teacher/researcher attempted to improve their English reading comprehension ability by exploiting out-of-class learning. To do so, learner autonomy was fostered through SDL outside the

classroom. A provision of opportunities to practice SDL outside the classroom by taking control of students' own learning should enhance their learner autonomy that will enable them to become more autonomous, which in turn, improve their language learning. To equip students with learning tools for their SDL, a learner training scheme inclusive of the concept of learner autonomy and SDL (psychological aspect) and reading strategies including cognitive and metacognitive strategies (methodological aspect) were organized at the outset of the course. Figure 1 displays the conceptual framework.



Figure 1 The conceptual framework

6.3 Research Design and Procedure

This research project took a form of an embedded mixed methods design with a variant of the embedded experimental model. This model is defined by having qualitative data embedded within an experimental design (such as a true experiment or quasi-experiment). The priority of this model is established by the quantitative, experimental methodology, and the qualitative dataset is subservient within that methodology (Creswell, 2007: 69). As for the primary purpose, this mixed methods study aimed to investigate the effect of SDL on learner autonomy using One-Group Pretest-

Posttest Design (O1 X O2) under a pre-experimental research design. Data were gathered quantitatively using a questionnaire to investigate learner autonomy of the MBA students, which were hypothesized to be significantly increased after performing SDL outside the classroom. A secondary purpose was to gather qualitative interview data that would explore how SDL helps MBA students develop learner autonomy. The secondary database was to gain insights and provide support for the primary purpose. The embedded experimental model of this study is displayed in Figure 2.

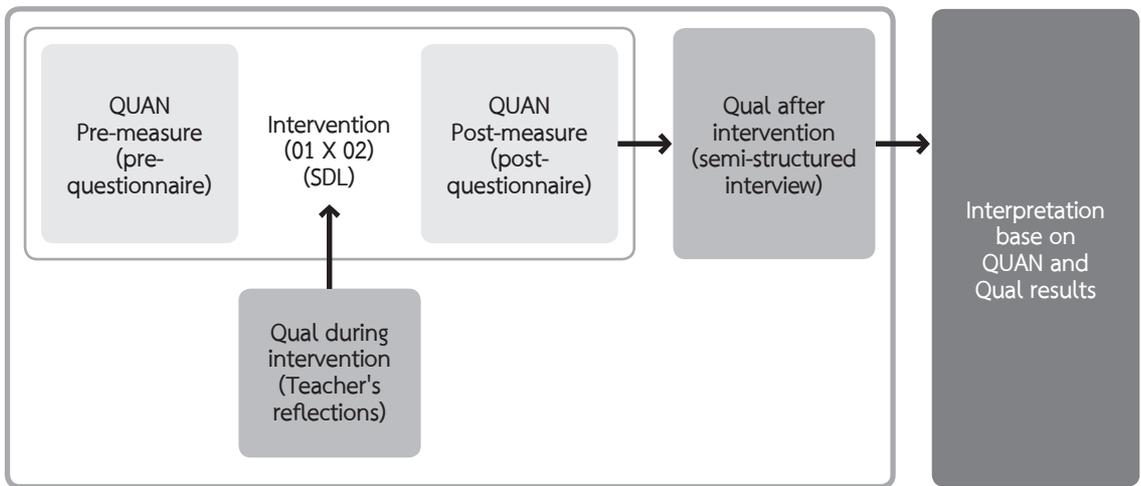


Figure 2 The Embedded Experimental Model

6.4 Instruments

The two important research tools to collect the data are a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. They were in a Thai language.

6.4.1 Questionnaire

The 5-point Likert scale questionnaire with two parts of totally 53 statements (Swatevacharkul, 2006) was used to collect data. The questionnaire, designed to measure attitudes, characteristics, and skills related to learner autonomy and strategic English reading, finds its content validity of 0.80, and its 0.84 reliability was reported. Part one deals with learner autonomy consisting of “attitudes towards learner autonomy” (8 statements), “willingness to learn” (6 statements), “self-confidence to learn” (5 statements), and “English learning motivation” (6 statements). This part is in relation to the psychological preparation, which aims at investigating students’ development of learner autonomy. The second part includes “capacity to learn autonomously” (7 statements), “cognitive reading strategy” (10 statements), and “metacognitive reading strategy” (11 statements), which corresponded to the methodological preparation. This part, therefore, aims at obtaining information on students’ behaviors regarding their SDL outside

a classroom in relation to the use of learning strategies in general and reading strategies. The evaluation criteria of the questionnaire were as follows: 0.00 - 1.50 means learner autonomy is ‘very low’, 1.51 - 2.50 ‘low’, 2.51 – 3.50 ‘moderate’, 3.51 - 4.50 ‘high’, and 4.51 - 5.00 ‘very high’.

6.4.2 Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

A semi-structured interview was conducted with 5 Thai students: 3 female and 2 male students. They were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Some questions were:

What does learning a foreign language (English) mean to you, at the moment and previously?; Who or what involve in the learning process?; What do you think about how you should learn in order to be successful in language learning?; Do you think you have done well or are successful in learning English? Why?

6.4.3 Pedagogical Instruments

A record of work and reading strategy checklist are the two pedagogical instruments. The former consisting of My learning goal, What I have done, What I have learned, Reflections on usefulness and problems, and Future plans (Benson, 2011: 71) required each student to reflect on his or her SDL on a weekly basis, while the reading strategy

checklist is a 3-point Likert scale of 20 reading strategy statements consisting of both cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Swatevacharkul, 2006). Students rated on each statement after finishing their SDL of each week. Checking records of work and reading strategy use, the teacher wrote her reflections on a weekly basis regarding the students' SDL. Taken and adapted from Benson (2011: 71), a Record of Work is composed of these items:

My learning goal (Tell your goal of reading comprehension practice); What I have done (Describe activities and write down the title of any material you have used); What I have learned (Summarize what you think you have learned in a few words and write your own sentences from the selected 5 words appearing in the reading text); Reflections (Comment on how useful and enjoyable your activities were. Any problems?); Future plans (Note down next activity and when you will do it. Also, note any changes to your goal or plan); and Teacher's feedback (a space for the teacher to write her feedback).

6.5 Data Collection Procedure

Week 1: Students received learner training which refers to a preparation program for students to perform SDL outside of class. It aimed to prepare students psychologically and methodologically. The psychological preparation introduced the concept of learner autonomy and SDL with a focal aim to create favorable attitudes towards learner autonomy fostered by SDL. Positive attitudes, willingness, self-confidence, and motivation to learn autonomously outside a class room must be appreciated by the students. The methodological preparation explicitly taught reading strategies inclusive of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The psychological preparation was carried out in the first session. However, the reading strategy training had been

continued for 4 consecutive weeks from weeks 1 to 4. It must be noted that students completed the questionnaire after the learner training during week 1.

Weeks 1-7: Each student performed SDL outside a classroom for 7 consecutive weeks. Each week they decided on what to read, and selected a reading material of their own interest. They had freedom to choose a type, a level of difficulty, and a length of a reading text as SDL was carried out under their own direction (Benson, 2011). Then, they did reading and completed a Record of Work and rated on a 3-scale Reading Strategy Checklist. In class on every Saturday, they submitted the SDL task which comprised a Record of Work, Reading Strategy Checklist, and a reading material in a portfolio. They received their portfolio back and a feedback from a teacher/researcher next Saturday. In week 8, they submitted the portfolio having all of the 7 pieces of SDL tasks. A score of 20% was allotted for the SDL project. Each week the teacher provided written feedback regarding any aspects of the student's SDL on a space for Feedback of a Record of Work. In class, the teacher personally talked informally to each student on his or her SDL. Verbal advice on any aspects of their SDL was provided if needed.

Week 8: The students completed the questionnaire and were requested to express their opinions on a Learning Summary and Evaluation Sheet. They wrote their opinions in Thai in order to prevent any language barrier on their opinion, thought, and ideas.

7. Data Analysis and Results

The dependent samples t-test was calculated to test the hypothesis, and the findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The Effect of SDL on a Development of Learner Autonomy

Questionnaire	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-questionnaire	3.56	0.30	28	1.98	0.06
Post-questionnaire	3.70	0.39			

P > 0.05

Table 1 shows that $0.05t_{28} > 1.98$, and the hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, on average, learner autonomy of the subject students before the SDL (M = 3.56, SD = 0.30) and that after the SDL project (M = 3.70, SD = 0.39) was not significantly different ($\alpha = 0.05$). This means that, on average,

learner autonomy of MBA students was at a high level and not significantly increased from the pre-questionnaire. Therefore, there was no effect size. Further analysis of each domain of learner autonomy was carried out, and the findings were as follows (Table 2).

Table 2 Comparison of each Domain of Learner Autonomy

Learner Autonomy /Domain	Pre-Questionnaire			Post-Questionnaire			df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Meaning	Mean	SD	Meaning			
Attitudes towards learner autonomy	4.01	0.39	high	3.96	0.52	high	28	-0.68	0.50
Willingness to learn	3.78	0.34	high	3.82	0.36	high	28	0.53	0.60
Self-confidence to learn	3.10	0.40	moderate	3.19	0.68	moderate	28	0.76	0.46
Learning motivation	3.63	0.60	high	3.97	0.10	high	28	4.17	0.00*
Capacity to learn autonomously	3.70	0.49	high	3.93	0.55	high	28	2.11	0.04**
Cognitive strategies	3.23	0.33	moderate	3.33	0.39	moderate	28	1.10	0.28
Metacognitive strategies	3.51	0.57	high	3.73	0.72	high	28	1.59	0.12

*P < 0.01/ **p < 0.05

As can be seen from Table 2, SDL has more or less the same effects on the five domains of learner autonomy, which will be the focus of discussion of this paper. There are two domains, that is, motivation to learn English and capacity to learn autonomously, showing a significant difference after the SDL project. However, this is not reported here due to a space limitation.

8. Discussion

It was found that learner autonomy is not significantly different after the SDL project. Learner autonomy of the MBA subjects was high before the treatment using SDL. The findings support Benson's (2001) argument that an assumption can be made that autonomy can be developed through participation in self-directed modes of learning, but it cannot be assumed that autonomy is a consequence of performing SDL. The explanations might be as follows.

8.1 The Nature of Adult Learners

Adult learners are autonomous, independent, and self-reliant, who are self-directed towards goals (Cercone, 2008). The subjects were seen at the very beginning of the course to be highly autonomous, who are ready to take control of their own learning. The evidence from the interviews clearly supports the quantitative findings. The subject students conceived that in the language learning process the students themselves are the most important, although they agreed that several things involve in the learning process, namely learning media, interesting activities, and teachers. Some excerpts are as follows.

“I think teachers must provide guidance if students’ foundation is not strong enough. Peers are helpful in increasing my knowledge. Social media are important as learning tools, such as Google and the Internet. It’s beneficial for translation. However, everything depends on us (students). We must be attentive and try to understand what we learn. If we’re not attentive to learn, we’ll forget it. Also, we can do self-study. I must pay attention and practice on a regular basis”. (Female, no. 1)

“It’s me, as the most important. I must be attentive, determined, and able to find time to learn. Next is a teacher, followed by foreign friends so that we can talk English”. (Female, no. 2).

The excerpts above suggest that in order to be successful in language learning, students need to practice and try to use the language being learning, and this clearly reflects their perception towards successful foreign language learning. Practice and use is the key to success. Use of the language being learning is a characteristic of autonomous learner (Little, 1990; Pemberton & Cooker, 2012: 214). Autonomy is a means to use the target language for communication, and the subject students strongly realize this fact. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the subject students, as being graduate working students, are aware of their

own learning responsibility and highly ready to exercise their autonomy to use the target language. This calls for an emphasis on use of the language in any courses.

In addition, the nature of the business administration field emphasizes critical thinking and analytical skills, as empirically revealed by the interview excerpt. These qualities are pivotal for being autonomous learners. Some interview excerpts are as follows:

“I must give more time to learn English and read. I’ve studied business administration. This field of study focuses on thinking and planning. SDL gives me a new perspective. I was the one who rarely read English, but now I read it. And finally, I can see what appear on the English lessons from my reading texts. The course lessons are for practice, but the real thing is the reading texts for SDL. I’m able to read faster with better understanding. When I encounter new words, I try to interpret their meanings without consulting a dictionary”. (Male: no. 1)

The findings clearly show the relationships between adult maturity and learner autonomy. The subject students are autonomous, who view that they are the key agents in the language learning process, and practice is the key to language learning success. As adult learners in the business filed, they have been trained for critical thinking skills which is also a characteristic of autonomous learners. With their autonomy, they may develop highly positive attitudes towards learner autonomy and high willingness to direct their own learning.

8.2 Learner Training

In this study, based on the justification that learner training is the promising prerequisite for the SDL to train students to become autonomous learners who take more responsibility for their own language learning and become more effective English learners who understand more of learning and acquire skills and knowledge that are necessary

to perform their SDL as per their learning goal (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989; Tudor, 1996), students were given both psychological and methodological preparations. Therefore, learner training is believed to play a significant role on the subject students' high autonomy at the outset of the experiment.

Furthermore, the questionnaire measurement of autonomy was conducted after the psychological preparation during the first week. This may help students explicitly understand the concepts of SDL and learner autonomy, and perceive the value of both things at the outset of the course. The empirical evidence shows that all students value SDL since it contributes to their improved reading skills and abilities. Moreover, learner training possibly withdraws all the false perceptions of learning experiences of the students and their role in language learning. As Holec (1981) mentioned, this process deals with the psychological aspect of learners since it aims at changing their attitudes towards learning and their role as well as confidence to make self-assessment of their learning performance.

The implication is on the benefits of learner training and a necessity to get students fully prepared for their own learning. In any SDL or self-study program, learner training consisting of both psychological and methodological preparations must be incorporated at the very beginning of the course.

8.3 Time Factor

Related to the second point of discussion above, the time factor might be one more reason why SDL does not significantly increase a level of autonomy of the subject students. As a matter of fact, these students are seen to be highly autonomous since the first week of the course. Only 7-8 weeks of experiences of SDL outside a classroom may not be sufficient to increase a dramatic level of autonomy, in particular for reading abilities. Development of autonomy is a gradual process.

Likewise, the methodological aspect to take learning responsibility is also a gradual process of acquisition, that is, acquisition of knowledge and knowledge students need for such purpose. Students should learn to use tools, such as dictionaries and grammar books (Holec, 1981). Students need to practice and use learning strategies being taught for a years-long period of time to investigate the effects of learning strategy instruction (Chamot, Barnhardt, et. al., 1993; and Chamot, Robbins et al., 1993). This may be the reason why the cognitive reading strategies were seen as moderately employed by the subject students. Cognitive strategies make learners able to understand and produce a new language by many various ways, ranging from repeating to analyzing expressions to summarizing (Oxford, 1990). Compared to metacognitive skills, these cognitive skills are more difficult to develop since they require mental processing of the language. As the current findings show, metacognitive strategies were employed more frequently than the cognitive strategies.

There was evidence related to the use of cognitive reading strategies from the teacher's reflections based on a record of work of each student. Up to week 3, students still mainly relied on consulting a dictionary for unknown words meanings. Also, in week 3, some students mentioned that they would study sentence structures so as to analyze sentences more effectively. This can be interpreted that their cognitive knowledge on English grammar has not yet mastered. As research shows, cognitive strategies had the strongest influence on learning achievement, and higher proficiency EFL students use learning strategies more often than the lower ones, especially cognitive strategies (Wu, 2008). This suggests that students, particularly low achievers, need to learn and practice intensively on cognitive reading strategies.

8.4 Self-Confidence and Role of Teacher

Overall, although these adult learners are seen to be highly autonomous, their self-confidence to learn English is found to be moderate. This domain mainly asks about the extent that students want to rely on the teacher and their confidence to manage time for effective SDL. Time is a crucial factor for adult learners who work and study. The subjects admitted that busy working days hinder their SDL, and this may explain their moderate self-confidence to manage time for effective SDL.

Regarding the self-confidence to learn English by themselves, the interviews on the conception of self as a language learner revealed that individual students thought their English was not satisfactory although they felt that their reading ability was slightly improved. One male student said “I’m successful only for the first step. I can read and write sentences, but just fairly. I understand grammar, but there still are many things that I don’t understand”.

Self-confidence to learn appears to have a relationship with English ability or proficiency of learners. Existing research shows that high Thai achievers are more autonomous than the low achievers (Swatevacharkul, 2016). The English proficiency of most students participating in this current study is below the pre-intermediate level. This may be the explanation of their moderate self-confidence. Also, the questionnaire findings on this domain showed that students highly like the teacher to be their learning supporter all the time to increase their self-confidence (Mean = 3.66). Corroborated with the qualitative findings, students like to receive feedback from the teacher since it clarifies their misunderstanding of language usage and give direction on what to improve. This obviously reinforces the importance of quality feedback during the SDL process.

“The teachers’ suggestion is like the reminder of what I have to improve on and to review”. (Male: no. 2).

“... the most important thing is feedback because the teacher corrects my writing mistakes. Once we know our mistakes, we’ll improve our writing of next time”. (Female: no. 3)

“The teacher’s feedback is useful. Sometimes, we don’t know some grammatical points; the teacher will explain and give us some techniques to learn. We can use them for the next learning and even apply them for a daily use”. (Female: no.1).

The findings appear to reflect a relationship between a degree of self-confidence and cognitive strategy use. Self-confidence to read may be increased if students are able to masterly use more cognitive strategies. The implication is, thus, on a significant role of a teacher in SDL of Thai students, as a counsellor or cognitive and affective supporter of the students. A teacher can create a task value by providing cognitive and morale support. Therefore, SDL is not self-study without any involvement of a teacher. Even adult students, particularly the ones whose English is not strong, still want guidance and support from their teacher in order to improve their English abilities and strengthen their self-confidence in learning English. As Little (1997) argues, support and co-operation with other people are necessary for autonomy development.

9. Recommendations

For further research, time of the experiment should cover a longer period of time, at least a normal term of 4 months or a year so as to investigate a factor of time spent on SDL on development of learner autonomy. Additionally, this study should be replicated with subjects studying different fields of study in order to strengthen the reliability of the current findings. Investigating the relationship between learner autonomy and reading ability is also suggested.

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