

ความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษด้วย ตนเองของนักเรียนไทยระดับมัธยมปลาย ในโครงการภาษาอังกฤษ

Learner Autonomy for English Learning of Thai EP
High School Students

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บทคัดย่อ

ความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองซึ่งนำไปสู่การเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิตนั้นเป็นแนวคิดที่มีความสำคัญในระบบการศึกษาไทยเช่นเดียวกับบทบาทของภาษาอังกฤษที่มีความสำคัญในฐานะที่เป็นเครื่องมือเพื่อการสื่อสารระหว่างประเทศ ด้วยเหตุนี้ จึงมีการก่อตั้งโครงการภาษาอังกฤษ หรือโครงการ EP ในบางโรงเรียนขึ้นมาโดยกระทรวงศึกษาธิการ ในปี พ.ศ.2538 ดังนั้น งานวิจัยนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อเปรียบเทียบความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษด้วยตนเองของนักเรียนโครงการภาษาอังกฤษ และโครงการปกติ โดยใช้วิธีการวิจัยแบบผสมผสานแบบแผนเชิงอธิบายซึ่งใช้วิธีการเก็บข้อมูลที่แตกต่างกัน 2 วิธีเพื่อยืนยัน ตรวจสอบ หรือสนับสนุนข้อค้นพบ ทำการเก็บข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณด้วยแบบสอบถามและข้อมูลเชิงคุณลักษณะด้วยวิธีการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างแบบสอบถามที่ใช้วัดระดับความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองประกอบด้วยด้านความเต็มใจในการรับผิดชอบการเรียน ด้านความมั่นใจในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง ด้านแรงจูงใจในการเรียน และด้านศักยภาพในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง ตัวอย่างคือนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 หรือ เกรด 12 ของโรงเรียนรัฐบาล 3 โรงเรียนที่ตั้งอยู่ในเขตกรุงเทพมหานคร โดยทุกโรงเรียนเปิดสอนทั้งโครงการภาษาอังกฤษและโครงการปกติ ทำการเลือกโรงเรียนโดยวิธีสุ่มแบบแบ่งกลุ่ม และตัวอย่างคือนักเรียนจำนวนทั้งหมด 454 คน แบ่งเป็นนักเรียนในโครงการภาษาอังกฤษ 227 คน และโครงการปกติ 227 คน

จากการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยทดสอบค่าที แบบ independent samples พบว่ามีความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญของความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษด้วยตนเองของนักเรียนทั้งสองโครงการ ซึ่งหมายความว่า โดยเฉลี่ย ความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษด้วยตนเองของนักเรียนโครงการภาษาอังกฤษสูงกว่านักเรียนในโครงการปกติ ประเด็นที่นำมาอภิปรายผลวิจัยดังกล่าว คือ “โอกาสได้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ” ซึ่งเกิดจาก “การเรียนแบบบูรณาการสาระและภาษา (CLIL)” ซึ่งเป็นรูปแบบเฉพาะของโครงการภาษาอังกฤษมีส่วนในการสร้างโอกาสให้นักเรียนโครงการภาษาอังกฤษได้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษที่กำลังเรียนอยู่ และพบว่าการใช้ประโยชน์จากโอกาสที่ได้รับมีความสัมพันธ์กับ “การอนุমানสาเหตุความสำเร็จในการเรียนกับความพยายาม” นอกจากนี้ “แรงจูงใจในการเรียน” มีอิทธิพลอย่างมากต่อระดับความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองของนักเรียนโครงการภาษาอังกฤษ มีการอภิปรายต่อไปถึงปัจจัยที่ก่อให้เกิดแรงจูงใจสูงในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษอีกด้วย บทความวิจัยยังเสนอข้อเสนอนี้สำหรับครูผู้สอน ผู้วางนโยบาย และนักวิจัยที่สนใจจะทำการวิจัยในประเด็นที่เกี่ยวข้องต่อไป

คำสำคัญ: ภาษาอังกฤษโครงการภาษาอังกฤษ มัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 ความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองนักเรียนไทย

Abstract

The concept of learner autonomy that is associated with, and leads to, life-long learning has been emphasized in the Thai education system. Likewise, the significance of the role of English as a tool for international communication has been recognized in the Thai education system, and this is the rationale for the establishment of English Programs or EP in some schools by the Ministry of Education in 1995 (B.E. 2538). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to compare the learner autonomy of students learning English in an English Program (EP) and non-EP students in a normal program. This study employed explanatory design mixed research methods which used two different methods to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings. Quantitative data were gathered by questionnaires, and qualitative data were collected by the semi-structured interviewing method. The learner autonomy questionnaire is composed of willingness to take learning responsibilities, self-confidence to learn autonomously, motivation to learn English, and capacity to learn autonomously. The study subjects were Grade 12 students in three public schools that offer EP and non-EP in Bangkok, randomly selected by a cluster sampling technique. In total, there were 454 students; among them 227 were from the EP and another 227 were from the non-EP.

Based on the independent samples t-test analysis, the results showed that there was a significant difference in terms of learner autonomy for English learning for students in the EP and non-EP ($p < 0.05$). This means that, on average, learner autonomy for students learning English in the EP was higher than that of the students in the non-EP. Discussions were made on “opportunities to use English that are enhanced by “the content and language integrated learning (CLIL)” as the approach employed by the EP provides opportunities for the use of the target language. Exploitation of the provided opportunities is seen to be associated with the students’ “causal attribution of learning success to effort”. In addition, “learning motivation” was found to have a dramatic influence on the greater degree of learner autonomy of the EP students, and the discussions were furthered by exploring factors causing such high learning motivation. Implications were drawn and recommendations were provided for teachers, policy makers, and further researchers.

Keywords: English, English Program (EP), Grade 12, Learner Autonomy, Thai Students

Introduction

Learner autonomy has long been accepted and considered as the ultimate goal in language education by many researchers, teacher educators, and policy makers (Wenden, 1987; Benson, 2011) and the realisation of individual potential (Sinclair, 1996). Autonomy is “an ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec, 1981, p. 3), and is a matter of degree. According to Dickinson (1987, p. 11), autonomy is “the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions”. Benson (2001, p. 110) defined autonomy as “the capacity to have control over one’s own learning”, which has various aspects, and autonomy may take various forms which can be recognized by the behaviours associated with such control. These behaviours are divided into three levels of control over learning: learning management, cognitive processes and learning content (Benson, 2001). In order to foster autonomy, there is no particular approach. According to Benson, any practice that aims to encourage and enable learners to take greater control of any aspect of their learning can be applied to fulfil this purpose. In Benson’s (2011) view, autonomy is not a learning method, but it is an attribute of the approach to the learning process of a learner. For this study, learner autonomy refers to an attitude that learners hold about their role and their capacity to take responsibility for their own English learning, which will reflect their readiness to perform autonomous or self-directed learning.

In terms of research, it has been found that autonomous learners are successful language learners. Learner autonomy has a positive correlation with a deep learning approach (Swatevacharkul, 2009). Autonomous learners are deep learners. As Knowles (1975) pointed out, self-directed or autonomous learning makes individual learners take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating their learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. This way of learning by doing assists learners to learn how to learn more effectively than learning by receiving knowledge transmitted from teachers. Learning motivation is, therefore, boosted. As a matter of fact, autonomous learners are motivated learners (Ushioda, 1996). Motivation is one of the key components of learner autonomy.

Although originated in the western world, the concept of autonomous learning, which leads to lifelong learning, is emphasized in the Thai basic education system, which includes education at every level before the level of higher education (Office of the National Education Commission, 2003).

Despite lifelong learning being the highly desired educational goal of the Thai education system, it was found that the autonomous knowledge acquiring skill of primary and secondary school students was lower than the standard, according to the external assessment of The Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) during 2001-2005. Furthermore, the second assessment during 2005-2008 revealed that most students failed Standard 6: the autonomous knowledge acquiring skill (Office of the Education Council, 2010). The autonomous knowledge acquiring skill is a foundation that every learner should possess; otherwise, the development of the lifelong learning skills of Thai people may be unsatisfactory.

Therefore, there has been an attempt to implement policy related to lifelong learning. The National Education Plan, Revised Edition, B.E. 2552-2559 (A.D. 2009-2016), includes learner autonomy as one of the goals of the urgent implementation policies related to education and learning quality development of every level and every type of education: formal, non-formal and informal education systems. The goal stipulates that “learners are equipped with knowledge, capacity, and competency to read and write Thai and foreign languages. They have calculation, critical thinking, problem-solving, creative and innovative thinking skills, as well as the desire to read and learn. They are able to perform autonomous learning, acquire knowledge and continue practicing lifelong self-development. ...” (Office of the Education Council, 2010, p. 110). To conclude, autonomous learning is of indispensable values in the Thai education system because of its association with learning success and its support for lifelong learning and lifelong self-development as a human being in a knowledge-based society.

In the era of globalization, English plays a significant role as a tool for international communication. The importance of English has been realized in the Thai education system, and this has given rise to the establishment of English Programs or EP in Thailand. The EP or bilingual program was initiated by the Office of the Private Education Commission (OPEC), Ministry of Education in 1995 (B.E. 2538). At that time, EP was called ‘the program using English as a medium of instruction’. The schools under the control of OPEC have been authorized to run EP since then. EP employs the basic education curriculum, B.E. 2554 (A.D. 2011) that involves learners’ basic English ability, the integration of ethics, morality, and virtue, as well as the organization of the learning context that blends Thai-ness and international characteristics. The major objective is, therefore, to enable students to be capable of and skillful in using English at an international level and to live their life well in Thailand as well as to further their study in a local or overseas education institute (The Educational Innovation Development Commission, 2011). It is clear that among the basic education institutes, EP appears to have the highest potential to develop Thai students’ English ability.

In terms of research, there are several reasons why EP students are chosen to participate in this study. First, EP is an immersion program in which learners are immersed in the target language (English) for a certain period of time, both in and out of class. Learners have a great deal of English exposure as they study at least four core subjects out of nine in English, except Thai Language and Social Studies. At least 15 hours per week are allocated for classes conducted in English. Therefore, EP students are unique in terms of their English learning context and environment, compared to that of non-EP or a normal program. This makes EP popular and attractive to stakeholders, and it has positive prospects for future growth. Second, the evaluation of the academic success of EP does not exist, so whether the EP students perform well or not in their English and content learning is unknown (Bax, 2010). In this study, an ability to perform autonomous learning is considered as a part of academic success since it encourages effective learning and leads to learning success. Data on learner autonomy make it possible to learn about the EP students' learning performance. Therefore, it is an attempt of this study to investigate the learner autonomy of the EP students. However, students in non-EP or normal programs were used to compare their autonomy with the EP students. If there were no such data for comparison between the students of the two programs, it would not be certain whether EP will have more or less potential in shaping students to become autonomous English learners. Therefore, EP students are the main focus of this study.

Research Objective

The research objective was to compare learner autonomy for English learning of EP and non-EP students. The hypothesis tested whether there was a significant difference in terms of learner autonomy of students in EP and non-EP.

Research Methodology

The population consists of Mattayom Suksa 6 or Grade 12 students at a public school offering both a normal program (using Thai as the medium of instruction) and an English program or EP (mainly using English for instruction) in Bangkok. In total, there are 9 schools in Bangkok, offering a normal program and EP until Grade 12. The subjects were selected from the three public schools employing a cluster sampling technique. In total, there were 454 students who participated as the subjects in this study. 227 students were from the EP and the other 227 were from the non-EP. In terms of research design, this study employed

explanatory design mixed research methods which used two different methods to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings. Quantitative data were gathered by questionnaire, and qualitative data were collected by a semi-structured interview method.

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was the main research instrument. It was adopted from the work of Swatevacharkul (2009). To establish the validity of the questionnaire of this study whose subjects were secondary educational level students, second order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to determine the construct validity by using LISREL. The questionnaire was eventually composed of 29 out of the original 34 statements with the original 4 domains of learner autonomy, that is, willingness to take learning responsibilities (5 statements: I need to control myself to do learning tasks that I think I should do., I am pleased to take responsibility for my own learning.), self-confidence to learn autonomously (4 statements: I am confident that I can make a good effort in seeking knowledge I want to learn.), motivation to learn English (10 statements: I like to have the chance to decide on what and how to learn about English., I like to learn English because it is interesting and important.), and capacity to learn autonomously (10 statements: I like to have the chance to decide on what and how to learn about English., I like to learn English because it is interesting and important.).

These four domains of learner autonomy were derived from the review of the literature on autonomy and its components. Autonomous learners are willing to assume responsibility for their learning. They see that they have an important role in their learning. Besides, they are self-confident; they believe that they are able to learn and self-direct, or manage their learning. They are capable to work independently without teachers (Wenden, 1991; Dickinson, 1995). Autonomous learners are motivated learners, by definition (Ushioda, 1996), and according to Littlewood (1996), autonomy is composed of ability or capacity, which depends on knowledge about choices that have to be made from the alternatives, and necessary skills for exercising appropriate choices.

A computation of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient found the reliability of 0.91. It was found that that several negative meaning statements were excluded based on the CFA. The findings give a warning about employing negative meaning statements in a questionnaire with school students.

The questionnaire also contained part two, which consists of a list of open-ended questions that aimed at exploring the English learning experiences of the EP students. Semi-structured interviewing was conducted by phone with each selected student. Although beyond the scope of this paper, the qualitative data were used to support and elaborate discussions on the quantitative findings.

Results

The independent samples t-test analysis reveals the findings as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Level of Learner Autonomy of EP and Non-EP Students

Program	n	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
EP	227	3.94	0.48	452	-2.33	0.02*
Non-EP	225	3.83	0.50			
Total	452					

* $p < 0.05$

Table 1 shows that $t_{.05, 452} < -2.33$, and the hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, on average, the level of learner autonomy of EP students ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.48$) and that of non-EP students ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.50$) were significantly different ($\alpha = 0.05$). This means that, on average, learner autonomy for English learning of students in EP was higher than that of the students in non-EP.

However, when statistically tested, each domain of learner autonomy of students in both programs reveals findings as exhibited in Table 2.

Table 2: Statistical Test of Mean of each Domain of Learner Autonomy

Domain of learner autonomy		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		Independent Samples t-test		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Willingness to take learning responsibilities	Equal variances assumed	1.49	0.22	-1.35	45	0.18
Self-confidence to learn autonomously	Equal variances assumed	2.23	0.14	-0.33	45	0.74
Motivation to learn English	Equal variances not assumed	5.52	0.02	-2.98	444.81	0.00*
Capacity to learn autonomously	Equal variances assumed	0.91	0.34	-1.91	451	0.06

* $p < 0.05$

According to Table 2, the independent samples t-test reveals that the motivation to learn English of EP students is significantly different from that of non-EP students ($p = 0.00$). The other three domains of learner autonomy do not show significant differences between the EP and non-EP students. This means that, on average, the willingness to take learning responsibilities, self-confidence and the capacity to learn autonomously of the EP and non-EP students are more or less the same. However, EP students have more motivation to learn English than non-EP students.

Discussions

The quantitative finding revealed that, on average, autonomy of students learning English in EP was significantly higher than that of the students in non-EP. The possible explanations may be as follows.

Opportunities for Use of English

First, the opportunities to use English provided by the learning environment of EP are more conducive to a higher degree of English exposure compared to that of the normal program, which mainly uses Thai as a medium of instruction, and thereby enhance the autonomy for the English learning of EP students. Evidence obtained from the interview clearly revealed that these EP students are well aware of the development of their English competence, which is made possible by using it. Importantly, it is seen that such opportunities to use English are increased by the EP, compared to the non-EP. Some interview excerpts are as follows:

“I’m lucky because I am provided with more opportunities than non-EP students”. (Female)

“I feel that learning a lot of English enables me to dare to communicate with foreigners because of

English exposures and speaking on a regular basis. Also, I feel that we (EP students) are good at

English. Our English is better than students in the normal programme”. (Female)

“I feel that I like it because learning in the EP provides me with opportunities to use and practise English every day. Everyday practice of English makes me feel familiar with English, makes me love and has good attitudes towards English”. (Female)

The qualitative findings also showed that EP students have a major aim to improve their English. Actively exploiting opportunities to use the language in learning reflects a characteristic of autonomous learners. Autonomous learners of a second or foreign language are active users of the target language they are learning (Little, 1990; Pemberton and Cooker, 2012). Active application of the target language for communication is a way to develop students' learner autonomy.

The results also reflect the EP students' belief about foreign language learning. It will be successful provided that they have opportunities to use it, and where their mind-set is growth-oriented (Ryan & Mercer, 2012). To elaborate, ability can be improved based on practice and effort; in turn, positive feelings about language learning will be developed. As Scharle & Szabo (2000, p. 4) pointed out, "no matter how much students learn through lessons, there is always plenty more they will need to learn by practice on their own". This clearly emphasizes a necessity to perform autonomous learning as a way to exercise and develop their learner autonomy. To foster learner autonomy, opportunities to use the target must be created, and students must make use of such opportunities.

Exploration of what forms these EP students' beliefs about practice and use of the English language in relation to successful English learning is, therefore, worthwhile. There is empirical evidence from the qualitative data showing that their learning experiences of autonomous English learning both inside and outside of a classroom shape such beliefs. In class, the most frequently mentioned autonomous learning activities are dramatization and collaborative project work, which are seen to promote their autonomy. Dramatization and role playing aim to maximise the application of English. Likewise, collaborative project work has its end goal to provide opportunities for students to practice oral presentation skills that definitely involve the use of English. For both of these learning activities, metacognitive knowledge and skills are also developed, requiring students to plan or think about, monitor, and evaluate every step while carrying out these tasks. In addition, the popular edutainment activities initiated by the students themselves outside of a classroom, namely watching English films, listening to English songs, and reading English materials, such as novels, news or books are seen to help students improve their English abilities. All of these skills-oriented learning activities, both productive and receptive, mirror the students' need and desire to be competent users and speakers of English. To accomplish such goals, they understand and are well aware that they need to practice and use the target language both inside and outside the classroom.

EP as CLIL

EP employs content and language integrated learning or CLIL (Banegas, 2013). The integration of content and English creates more real and meaningful learning and interaction when the learning process is supported by authentic materials. Likewise, students feel motivated through the learning experiences received from the integration of content and language in that integration provides students, and in fact teachers as well, with possibilities to use the language meaningfully. In CLIL, students cognitively engage with content and tasks that promote problem solving and higher-order thinking processes (Coyle et al, 2010 cited in Banegas, 2013). CLIL also enhances opportunities to improve English competence because English is utilized in a real context for linguistic meaning negotiation. Taking control over their learning in terms of cognitive aspects (Benson, 2001), namely from authentic reading materials, fosters a development of autonomy, and forms positive attitude towards learning the language and a sense of learning achievement. As one student mentioned: I like it that I'm able to read science papers in English (because I've already learned vocabulary). Clearly, CLIL is seen to be effective to foster learner autonomy in terms of English learning. As Wolff (2003, p. 215) argues, "... Learners learn better and are more motivated than in traditional content subject teaching".

Using English as a medium of instruction exposes students to English to a great extent and immerses them in the English environment that is a favourable environment for the creation of a growth mind-set for the students. They are provided with opportunities to practice and use English in authentic linguistic and meaning negotiation situations with their teachers and classmates. This makes their English learning meaningful and real, as opposed to being just a performance as warned by Lamb and Budiyanto (2013). The application of English to communicate in authentic settings leads to an increasing effort on the part of learners to better their language learning (Gao, 2013).

Causal Attribution of Learning Success to Effort

The causes of learning success and failure may also contribute to the explanation of the EP students' high autonomy in learning English. There is empirical evidence regarding the EP students' conceptions of learning outcomes showing that they think they are highly successful in learning English. The causal attribution of the English learning success is made as a result of their 'effort' in using English. The finding is congruent with the work of Benson and Lor (1999) who found that Hong Kong first year students are likely to make causal attribution of English learning success as a result of effort and application. Effort is an internal and unstable factor, and a learner can take a great deal of control over it (Weiner,

1986). As argued by Williams and Burden (1999), the development of autonomy is closely related to the development of internal attributions, namely effort and ability. Acquiring a foreign language in a country where English is not an official language, like Thailand, takes tremendous time and never-ceasing effort. As the subjects of this study who feel successful in English learning pointed out, it is very difficult to master the English language, but they have been diligently trying to learn English and seek more knowledge to master their English. This implies that the belief in industrious and persistent efforts will yield a dramatic effect on their language competence; success through learning is made possible. Not only that, the evidence showed that an awareness of the fact that successful foreign language learning takes time and requires enormous effort helps increase learning responsibility, which leads to the curiosity to learn more. Learning curiosity helps hinder laziness, which was reported as the first and major factor causing a lack of desire to learn. The desire to learn is one of the characteristics of autonomous learners (Breen & Mann, 1997). In addition, as Little (1990) argued, learner autonomy can be gradually developed over time. Autonomous learners must be aware that they need to put effort into their learning and be persistent in the practice efforts. The findings of the present study parallels existing research showing that students are most likely to be motivated and have higher achievement if they attribute success to factors over which they have control (Hsieh, 2012). It can be concluded that opportunities to use or practice the target language provoke learning effort, which enhances language learning success.

The perception of the students on their English learning success as a result of their effort also leads to a higher expectation of their English learning achievement. As the findings revealed, students whose English abilities have improved feel that such improvement is not yet satisfactory. They desire greater improvement, and they think and believe that they have the capacity to do it. This suggests that a certain level of learning success resulting from learning effort induces higher expectations of such success, which also increases intrinsic motivation, self-confidence and a willingness to persistently engage themselves in the learning process for greater achievement. Every aspect of quality and successful learning is doubled in its degree, which will, in turn, direct the students to the mode of autonomous learning and turn them to be autonomous learners. This implies that teachers should make students attribute the cause of learning success to effort and help them move towards their fullest potential by becoming more autonomous.

Figure 1 summarises the relationship between learning effort that is seen to be associated with the opportunities to use the language and its effects on the development of learner autonomy as discussed.

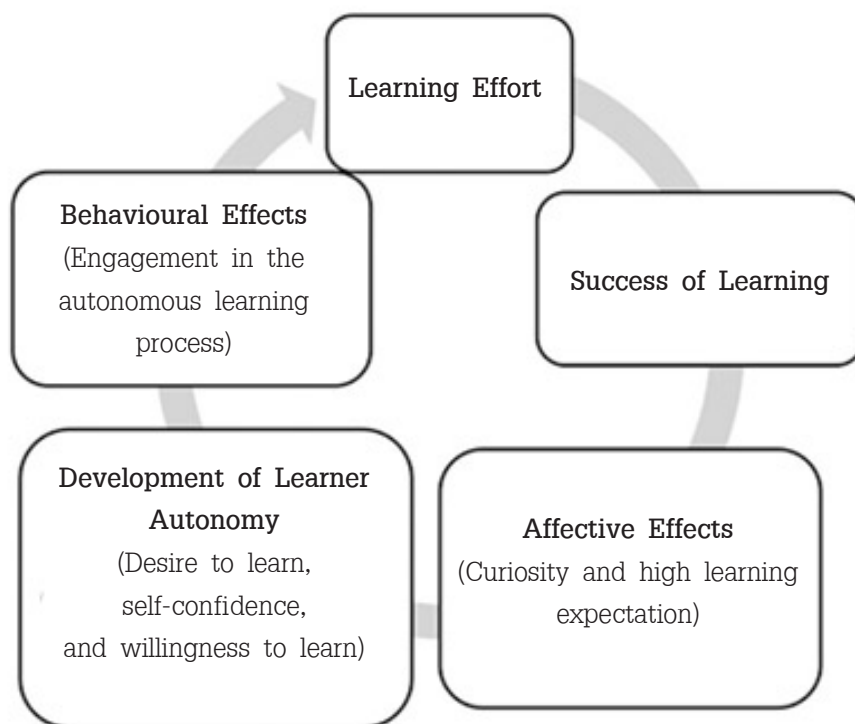


Figure 1: Relationship between Effort and its Effects on Learner Autonomy Development

Learning Motivation

Learning motivation appears to have a dramatic influence on the degree of learner autonomy, which is consistent with previous work (Swatevacharkul, in press). On average, EP students have higher motivation to learn English than non-EP students, which, in turn, makes them more autonomous in their English learning. The learning motivation of the EP students is thus an issue worthy of thorough discussion.

By definition, autonomous learners are motivated learners (Ushioda, 1996). EP students are seen to be intrinsically motivated due to their perception of the importance of English. As revealed by the quantitative findings, the highest rated statement showed that English is perceived as very important for their future education or tertiary education that requires them to pass a high stakes gate keeping exam. Moreover, they perceived that English is important as an international language, which they will need to use for global communication. Supported by

the qualitative findings, the first reason why they decided to enrol in an EP is because of their intrinsic motivation to learn English. The appreciation of English and a desire to learn and improve it in order to be able to use English for communication are the major reasons. All of these reflect their intrinsic motivation to learn English. As pointed out by Brown (2000), in language learning, learners who learn for their own self-perceived needs and goals are intrinsically motivated. Learners with intrinsic motivation are more able to establish learning goals, which leads to a greater willingness to take responsibility for their own learning and for the learning outcomes (Scharle & Szabo, 2000).

Interest should not only be on whether students are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated, but it is worthwhile exploring how their motivation occurs. In this study, the qualitative and quantitative findings revealed the following motivating factors as shown in Figure 2.

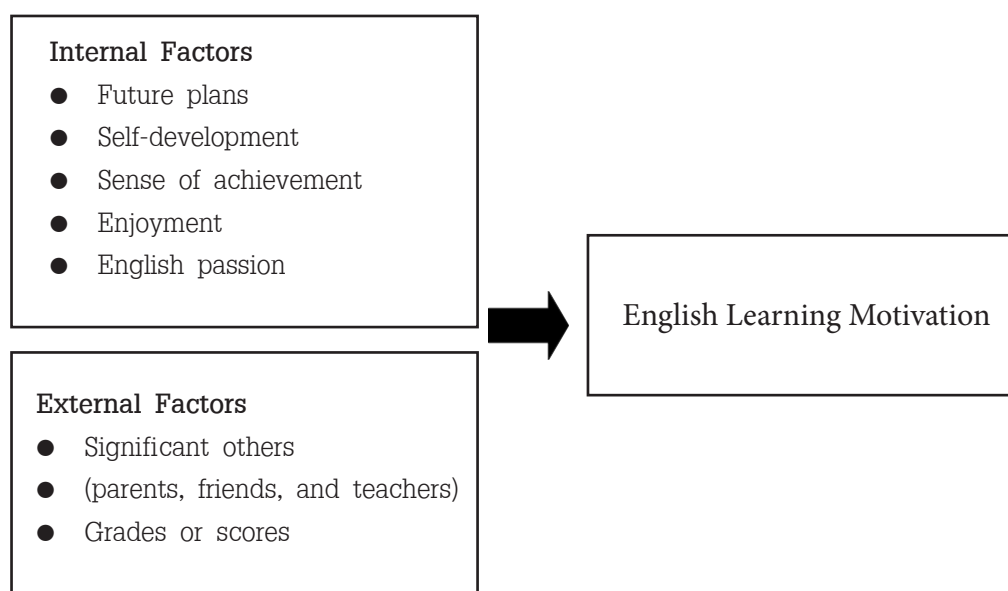


Figure 2: Motivating Factors

As seen in Figure 2, the English learning motivation of the EP students derives from both internal and external sources. In regard to the internal factors, future plans for further education as a short term goal and a good career as a long term goal are seen to be the most important internal motivating factors reported by EP students to manage their own learning. Expectations related to passing a high stakes test to gain a seat in a well-known state university is seen as a short-term goal, which definitely has an influence on their safe and sound career in the long-term future, in turn, enabling them to be able to take care of their own family.

Next, their future success depends to a large extent on their English ability, and this is the important reason why they have a strong intention to develop themselves in terms of successful English learning, which will fulfil their desire to be successful in their profession. A future self-image, which is linked to the current self-image as a successful English learner who will have a bright future and a good career is, therefore, developed. As the qualitative findings revealed, the future self-image as a proficient English user is formed from the student's inner drive for better English, inspiration from English native speakers, hands-on experience of using English in real world situations, and a sense of competition with their fellow students. All of them are derived from students' learning experiences.

Using English inside and outside of a classroom in authentic situations triggers students' sense of English learning achievement. In class, fellow students are important in completing tasks and assignments. This reinforces the significance of learning collaboration and learning success. The ability to use English for the benefit of other people in society also creates a sense of achievement to students, which, in turn, acts like a powerful inner motive for achieving higher English competence. Consequently, the design of tasks or activities aiming at promoting students' use of English outside the classroom in authentic situations or events is deemed desirable.

Above all, feelings of fun and enjoyment deriving from learning English either inside or outside of a classroom are vital for students' commitment to learning by themselves. Entertainment-based English learning activities, namely watching films, listening to songs, and playing games outside of the classroom are the most popular among EP students. These fun learning activities that students prefer to do outside the classroom should then be incorporated into classroom activities.

The final internal factor relates to a passion for English. Feeling like or love for English drives the EP students to study English. Having an opportunity to spend time or stay in an English speaking country establishes an appreciative feeling or passion for English. However, other causes of such passion are worth further study.

In regard to external motivating factors, parents or guardians and intimate friends are seen as the sources of encouragement that motivate students to engage in their learning. For many students, it is their parents who decided to enrol them in an EP and who always support their children for their English learning achievement. The research evidence of the present study also showed that students require support from their parents. Parents are also their encouragement to perform well and continuously engage in learning. Therefore, parental support and encouragement have a positive impact on students' learning achievement.

Friends are also significant others who can support learning achievement. Good relationships shown through help, collaboration and encouragement are psychologically significant on the willingness to engage in learning which, in turn, leads to successful learning.

Interestingly, teachers were reported as the first group of persons involved in the learning process due to their vital role in employing teaching methodologies that must be motivating and stimulating in order to sustain students' engagement in their learning. However, teachers are viewed as having little influence on students' autonomous learning. This may reveal that autonomous learning, especially outside of the classroom, is a personal business of each individual student. Students take care of their autonomous learning and have freedom to decide about what to do and learn to improve their English ability. This finding supports the quantitative results that the EP students are highly autonomous.

The crucial role that grades or scores play on students' learning in a mainstream education system cannot be denied. Receiving a good grade or score as a result effort in managing their own learning is another extrinsic motivating factor, which is related to the student's tertiary education plan. One student pointed out that she has learned that grades are important for studying at a university. In formal basic education a good grade that appears to be an indicator of student performance, does not only reflect the learner's academic ability and potential, but also raises recognition of their self-value and increases their self-esteem.

In brief, language learning motivation is influenced by both internal and external motivating factors which then relate to successful learning outcomes. This finding parallels the work of Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan (2002), who found that motivation is a pivotal factor having an impact on the readiness of learners to learn the language autonomously. It is, therefore, essential to find ways to motivate learners before they are trained to be autonomous.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Learner autonomy in learning English for students in EP and non-EP was significantly different. On average, learner autonomy in learning English for students in EP was higher than that of students in non-EP. It can be concluded that the degree of autonomy and use of the target language that establishes communication interactions have a strong connection. Therefore, every attempt on the part of teachers or language institutions, whether EP or non-EP, must be made to provide meaningful learning experiences to students by creating opportunities for students to use the language they are learning in the most authentic manner possible.

Exposure to and regular use of the language enhances intrinsic learning motivation and promotes positive attitudes towards English learning which, in turn, leads to a feeling of self-confidence and a degree of effort that students are willing to make in order to increase their language learning ability, which is strongly believed to have a dramatic impact on their short-term tertiary education and long-term vocation plan and life achievement.

English teachers should be aware of the casual attribution of learning success and failure made by students at the outset of a course in order to help students make attribution of their learning failure to a controllable cause, namely effort. Therefore, teachers should encourage students to make more effort in their learning by providing opportunities for more practice and use of English. Receiving or seeking opportunities to use English is a key to success when learning a foreign language.

A comparative study on EP or non-EP teachers and students' perceptions of learner autonomy and autonomous learning is recommended. The findings may reveal congruence or mismatches between the perceptions of learner autonomy and autonomous learning. Whatever the findings will be, they will be beneficial for more effective English instructional organization. In fact, such comparative study can be carried out with other content subjects as well for the same purpose of better instructional organization.

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