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เรื่อง

ทัศนคติของผู้เรียนที่มีต่อการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง
Thai students' attitudes to self-directed learning

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Abstract

Learner autonomy and self-directed learning have enjoyed considerable popularity in education as attempts are made to make teaching and learning more relevant and efficient in a rapidly changing world. However, there are some concerns in some different cultural settings as to their effectiveness due to the capabilities of the students to take responsibility for and to make decisions about their education.

This study was designed to investigate Thai students' attitudes to strategies involving more self-direction in a university setting. It examined the responses of 691 first year undergraduate students at a Thai university to a questionnaire about self-directed learning in an EFL context. The findings revealed the students' dissatisfaction with traditional methods that required teachers to direct and dominate proceedings, and indicated that Thai students were ready to try other ways to conduct their education. The results of the study have important implications for Thai students, teachers, administrators and curriculum designers as they are exposed within their own cultural framework to findings from different educational contexts.

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Table of Contents

List of tables

List of figures

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the popularity of learner autonomy and self-directed learning in education, and the efforts to establish such methods at Ubon Ratchathani University (UBU), Thailand. It also outlines concerns about the implementation of what some regard to be culturally-inappropriate strategies, and the purpose for the study. The chapter concludes with a summary.

1.2 Learner autonomy and self-directed learning

The concepts of learner autonomy, the ability to take charge of one's own learning, and self-directed learning, the type of learning that may occur when individuals become autonomous, have received considerable favourable attention in education generally and language learning specifically. Their popularity is based upon the recognition of the need to make learners flexible and self-reliant for an increasingly changing society, and that learning becomes more effective when individuals are consulted about and involved in their education.

1.3 Background to the study

The Faculty of Liberal Arts at UBU recognised the importance of its English language students becoming autonomous learners and made a number of attempts to provide opportunities to develop self-directed learning. One of these was the establishment of the Self-Access Center (SAC) in 1993.

SAC provides print, audio, video and internet facilities in a comfortable, air-conditioned environment. Students are encouraged to use the resources in their own time and some courses have specific SAC times and tasks integrated with their lectures. Academic consultations with staff are available to students in SAC.

Despite the wealth of research evidence supporting the value of learner autonomy and self-directed learning, and the efforts of UBU to provide a friendly and helpful environment in which students can conduct their own education, there are some concerns about the success of SAC and its use by the students. Some of these concerns arise from the nature of learner autonomy and self-directed learning and their appropriateness to Thai students.

1.4 Concerns about learner autonomy and self-directed learning in Thai settings

Effective learner autonomy and self-directed learning require students to take responsibility for their own learning and to be able to make decisions without reliance upon teachers. These qualities of independence are promoted in students in Western

education, from where learner autonomy and self-directed learning emerged, by an organisation and implementation of systems which require their students to be individual thinkers and workers, often free of teacher direction. However, there are some that believe that Thai society and its education system does not assist the development of these qualities of taking responsibility and making decisions, and that Thai students experience difficulties by exposure to such teaching and learning methods. Thai students are traditionally inexperienced and reluctant to make decisions for themselves, and are used to following programs set out by others. Thai teachers are dominant features of the classroom environment, involved in all activities and regarded as knowledgeable experts in all areas. To expect Thai students to adopt and effectively use teaching and learning methods that are at odds with their cultural background may be introducing a tension into the educational atmosphere that is not constructive or productive.

1.5 Purpose of the study

This study was conducted to complete a preliminary investigation into the attitudes of Thai students to self-directed learning methods at the commencement of their university education. Do students who have not been traditionally exposed to educational systems that focus more on learners taking responsibility and making decisions aspire to more learner autonomy and self-direction? If not, what methods are appropriate for Thai students? If so, how are learner autonomy and self-directed learning best used in the Thai setting? The answers to these questions have important significance for students, teachers and curriculum designers in Thai education.

1.6 Summary

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the use of learner autonomy and self-directed learning in education and its implementation at UBU. It deals with some of the concerns about these methods in Thai settings, and outlines the purpose of the resultant study to investigate the authenticity of such concerns. It concludes with a summary.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the selective literature dealing with learner autonomy and self-directed learning. It considers the appropriateness of these methods in a number of Asian contexts and finally in Thai settings. It concludes with a summary of the chapter.

2.2 Learner autonomy

Holec's definition of learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (cited by Gardner & Miller. 1999, p.6; by Benson, 2004, p.290) is a popular one among researchers. It involves students taking responsibility and making decisions about their education. The concept grew out of the discussions "of life-long learning skills and the development of independent thinkers both of which originated in the 1960s" (Gardner & Miller, 1999, p.6). Others saw learner autonomy in terms of personal significance ("the opportunity to become a person"), political importance ("a recognition of the rights of learners"), and educational characteristics ("an approach to educational practice") (Benson & Lor, 1998; Gardner & Miller, 1999, p.6).

Some researchers attempted to concentrate not on defining the process of learner autonomy, but more on recognising the features of autonomous learners. These included active participation, an ability to deal with new information and to use it in everyday life, and a desire to plan (Gardner & Miller, 1999). Nunan (1996) stated a preference for "degrees of autonomy" (p.13) and the belief that autonomy may vary from time to time and between skills.

2.3 Self-directed learning

Self-directed learning is an attitude to learning that may occur when learner autonomy has been achieved and involves taking responsibility for the learning process (Finch, 2001). It can be defined in very general terms and "may range from a kind of learning which is totally learner-directed without any guidance from facilitators to self-learning programmes that are highly supervised and controlled" (Tsang, 1999, p.26).

Self-directed learning is not a modern concept, it being a common form of education before the introduction of formal schooling, as individuals and societies attempted to understand the world around them (Self-directed learning web page). Its emergence in the 20th century was in the area of adult education (Benson, 2004). Leading early researchers included Houle who investigated the motivation of self-directed learners and Tough who found that most adults spent 700 hours per year in learning, much of it self-planned (Self-directed learning web page). Tough stated that 90 per cent of adults were involved in some form of self-directed learning each year, and Cross believed that 70 per cent of adult learning used this approach (ERIC 1989).

Moulden (1988) found that 75 per cent of his French post-graduate learners of English considered "self-directed language learning more effective than teacher directed learning" (p.90). Press (1993) claimed that "observation and investigation have shown that many students learning a language (...) would welcome, and benefit from an element of self direction" (p.196).

Self-directed learning has become a popular form of education for a number of reasons. Its flexibility has proved convenient to people's busy and complicated lifestyles, as they seek to improve their professional, social and leisure skills, knowledge and attitudes in a society that increasingly emphasises the concept of lifelong learning (Malcolm & Rindfleisch, 2003). It has also been found to be a meaningful, challenging, enjoyable and motivating method of teaching and learning (ERIC 2001; Finch, 2001). Self-directed learning has developed as a more appropriate means of encouraging individuals to learn how to learn, instead of more traditional methods that stress the acquisition of knowledge, at the same time as allowing increased use of technology and more economical use of resources (Finch, 2001). It has proved successful with primary and secondary students, and with students with learning difficulties (Benson, 2004).

However, not all researchers are fully enthusiastic about students' attitudes to learner autonomy and self-directed learning. Little (1990) stated that students may not want autonomy as "their chief interest is in doing well in the exams, and it may be difficult to shake their belief that the teacher's job is straightforward to prepare them for that end" (p.7). Sneddon and Kramer (1994) made similar comments that students are "comfortable as passive learners and can feel quite threatened" (p.4) by ideas of

taking responsibility for learning and making decisions. Wenden (1991) found "that learners have often formed non-productive attitudes with regard to learning autonomously" (p.59). Gardner and Miller (1999) reported a number of instances of learners' resistance to autonomy on the basis that they expected constant teacher supervision and input.

2.4 Self-directed learning in Asian settings

The above literature has a heavy emphasis on Western personnel and contexts. What is the appropriateness of self-directed learning to settings outside of this culture?

A number of researchers have attempted to address this question based on their experiences in a range of Asian nations. Both Usuki (2003) and Takagi (2003) considered Japanese students to be passive, teacher-dependent and requiring assistance in developing skills in taking responsibility for their own learning. Huang (date?) found a similar passivity with Chinese students but suggested that it might be more to do with "their low motivation, their lack of proficiency and confidence" (p.18) than their cultural background. Pemberton, Ho, Lam and Toogood (1999) recognised the problems that Hong Kong students experienced in their use of self-access facilities due to pressure exerted on their time by lectures, exams, projects and assignments. The authors attempted to stimulate the student's self-directed learning by providing structured programs involving the facilities. The responses appeared to be positive as students felt confident in using the supportive framework. Tsang (1999) considered that Hong Kong students regarded teachers as symbols of power in education, and they believed that any system that did not rely on teachers in dominant

positions lacked authority. The Hong Kong students did not consider themselves to have the power or competence to direct their learning. Lee (1998) and Pierson (1996) reported similar qualities in their Hong Kong students. In a similar vein, the experiences of McClure (2001) in Asia indicated students' dependence on teachers. Jones (1995) remarked on Cambodian students' strong group reliance and suggested that the imposition of autonomy may be a case of "cultural insensitivity" (p.229).

The above examples suggested that resistance to learner autonomy and self-directed learning in Asian settings arose from the students due to their lack of preparation and skill. However, Tsang (1999) recognised teachers' doubts about their own and their students' abilities to cope with different teaching and learning methods that may challenge teachers' authority as a threat to the acceptance of new strategies:

> Letting go of authority and power is threatening and, while most teachers welcome change if the results are quickly apparent and positive, it is often difficult to see the results of change in the short term

(Tsang, 1999, p.32)

In dealing with difficulties in adopting learner autonomy and self-directed learning, one needs to consider that the terms have similar meanings for Asian and non-Asian contexts. Littlewood (2000) introduced the concept of "proactive" autonomy for that type found in Western situations in which students take charge of and direct their own learning. Littlewood believed such an autonomy to be rare in Asian contexts, but did admit the existence of "reactive" autonomy. In this, once a framework has been established to direct the students, they felt confident:

to learn vocabulary without being pushed, to do past examination papers on their own

initiative, or to organise themselves into groups in order to cover the reading for an

assignment

(Littlewood, 2000, p.136).

2.5 Self-directed learning in Thai settings

There are a number of researchers who have considered the question of the cultural

appropriateness of learner autonomy for Thai students. Both Dickinson (1996) and

Littlewood (1996) referred to two ideas from the work of Hofstede. Firstly,

Hofstede's study found Thailand to be a relatively strong "Collectivism" nation on a

"Collectivism-individualism" scale. This indicated a powerful allegiance of the

individual to the group, as opposed to the dominant self-interest of individuals in such

"Individualism" countries as USA, UK and Australia. Secondly, Hofstede identified

Thailand as having a high level of inequality in its society using the "Power Distance"

scale. In schools, this inequality would be shown by the location of power with the

teacher. Both these findings – the individual's concern for the group before his/her

own interests, and the placement of authority with the teacher – suggested that

Thailand would not be a suitable country for the effective implementation of a form of

learning that requires individuals to take personal responsibility and make decisions

regarding their own education.

The comments of Myint (1996) and Darasawang (2000) supported this idea that self-

directed learning by Thai students may be problematic. The traditional features of a

Thai classroom of respectful silence, the dominant teacher and the teacher-imposed

discipline, in contrast to Western students' questioning, the teacher as an advisor and

the expectation of students' self-discipline, appeared to be more an indicator of teacher-led education, not self-directed learning.

2.6 Summary

The research suggested a form of teaching and learning, self-directed learning, that is highly regarded as effective and appropriate for modern education. For its successful implementation, it requires a high degree of responsibility and decision-making on the part of the students. However, literature indicated that Asian students were passive and regarded the dominant role of the teacher as giving credence to the educational process. These qualities were not seen as being conducive to the production of students capable of taking responsibility for and making decisions about their teaching and learning. Similarly in the Thai setting, students were not seen as being prepared by their school system or their society to assume such qualities of independence. This study was designed and implemented to investigate the attitudes of some of this student body to the use of self-directed learning.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology of the study, describing the participants, the questionnaire, and the way in which data was collected and analysed to produce a level of readiness indicator for self-directed learning. A summary is provided.

3.2 Participants

Data relating to students' attitudes to self-directed learning in general and in language learning specifically was collected from 691 first year students (596 Science and Technology, and 95 Liberal Arts) at a Thai university at the commencement of semester one.

3.3 Questionnaire

Questionnaires have proved popular in research in education and language learning due to their accuracy and adaptability of use in different places and at different times (McDonough & McDonough, 1997).

The questionnaire used in this study contained 23 statements (see appendix 2). These were arranged in nine areas of investigation based on the work of Broady (1996) and

included readiness for self-direction; independent work in language learning; importance of class and teacher; learning styles; independent learning activities; selection of content; self-confidence; motivation; self-assessment (see appendix 1).

The statements in the questionnaire were written in simple English for ease of participant response. They were generally phrased in such a way to present different perspectives of the area of investigation (for example, *4.6 a) I think the teacher should select the content for language learning; 4.6 b) I am able to choose what to learn in language learning*). In this way, it was believed that participants would be required to consider their responses to the statements more carefully, and that the validity of the level of readiness indicators would be stronger when evidence was provided from more than one point of view. A Likert scale of response (1 – strongly disagree.... 5 - strongly agree) was used to reflect a range of opinions (McDonough & McDonough, 1997).

The questionnaires were administered to the students at the beginning of their first year studies, before they had been exposed to any form of learner autonomy and/or self-directed learning in the university context.

The responses to the 23 statements were collected, and the average scores of the 1-5 scale and the standard deviations were calculated.

3.4 Level of readiness indicator

Based on the average scores, a "level of readiness" indicator was made of the average

student's preparedness for self-directed learning in relation to each statement. These

indicators, very high, high, medium, low and very low, were determined by the

average response brackets in which the average scores were located, and by the nature

of the statements (see Figure 3.1: Method of determination of level of readiness

indicators).

Figure 3.1: Method of determination of level of readiness indicators

Likert scale	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree
score	1	2	3	4	5

average response	1-1.5	1.6-2.5	2.6-3.5	3.6-4.5	4.6-5

level of readiness (depending on nature of question)	very high or very low	high or low	medium	low or high	very low or very high
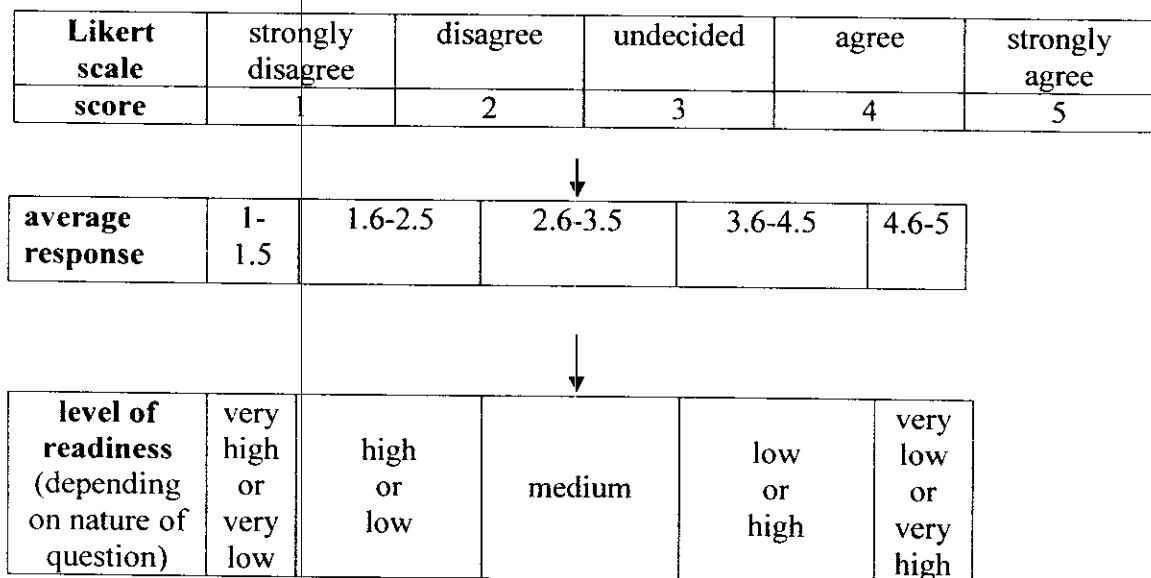
3.5 Summary

This chapter deals with a description of the participants, the questionnaire and the

methods of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the areas of investigation, statements, number of responses, averages, standard deviations and level of readiness indicators in table form.

4.2 Tables of results

Table 4.1: Area of investigation - readiness for self-directed learning

Statement	n	X	s.d.	Level of readiness
4.1 a) I prefer classes where I am encouraged to take part in deciding what will be learned and how to learn.	691	3.78	0.78	high
4.1 b) I expect the teacher to tell me exactly what to do.	691	1.72	0.79	high

Table 4.2: Area of investigation - independent work in language learning

Statement	n	X	s.d.	Level of readiness
4.2 a) In language learning, I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own much more than tasks where I work with my teacher.	691	2.75	1.04	medium
4.2 b) In language learning, I prefer to have teachers lead class activities.	691	1.72	0.96	high

Table 4.3: Areas of investigation – importance of class and teacher

Statement	n	X	s.d.	Level of readiness	
4.3 a) In language learning, the class environment and the teacher are very important.	691	1.49	0.65	very high	
4.3 b) In language learning, I am able to work outside of the class and without the teacher.	691	2.89	1.08	medium	

Table 4.4: Area of investigation - learning styles

Statement	n	X	s.d.	Level of readiness	
4.4 a) Teacher-fronted classes are more productive in language learning than other types of classroom activities.	691	2.44	1.01	high	
4.4 b) Group work is an important step to finally working on my own in language learning	691	3.62	0.99	high	

Table 4.5: Area of investigation – independent language learning activities

Statement	n	X	s.d.	Level of readiness	
4.5 a) I prefer to work independently of the teacher in grammar and vocabulary activities	691	2.58	1.07	low	
4.5 b) My reading and listening skills are developed better under the guidance of a teacher	691	1.74	0.76	high	
4.5 c) My writing and speaking improve quicker under teacher supervision	691	1.84	0.78	high	

Table 4.6: Area of investigation - selection of content

Statement	n	X	s.d.	Level of readiness	
4.6 a) I think the teacher should select the content for language learning	691	2.78	0.98	medium	
4.6 b) I am able to choose what to learn in language learning	691	3.13	0.98	medium	

Table 4.7: Area of investigation - self-confidence

Statement	n	X	s.d.	Level of readiness	
4.7 a) Teachers are the ones who should be responsible for the aims and objectives of language learning	691	2.50	0.95	high	
4.7 b) I am able to decide the aims and objectives of language learning	691	3.10	0.93	medium	
4.7 c) I give up when I experience problems in language learning	691	4.05	0.86	low	
4.7 d) I am able to find solutions to problems that I experience in language learning	691	2.88	0.97	medium	
4.7 e) I feel confident about my language skills	691	2.62	1.00	medium	
4.7 f) I am reluctant to use my language skills	691	2.46	1.02	high	

Table 4.8: Area of investigation - motivation

Statement	n	X	s.d.	Level of readiness	
4.8 a) External assessment is the thing that motivates me to work	691	3.56	1.06	low	
4.8 b) I am motivated by such things as self-satisfaction and understanding, not external assessment	691	4.22	0.90	high	

Table 4.9: Area of investigation - self-assessment

Statement	n	X	s.d.	Level of readiness	
4.9 a) I feel capable of assessing my own work	691	3.19	0.98	medium	
4.9 b) Students should not be responsible for assessing their own work	691	3.31	0.97	medium	

4.3 Summary

This chapter presents the results of the study in a series of tables relating to specific areas of investigation.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the major features of the results of the 691 questionnaires and highlights points of significance to the Thai university context. The initial discussion is arranged so that it closely follows the above tables of results.

5.2 Direct interpretation of results

Table 4.1: Area of investigation – readiness for self-directed learning

The averages of the Likert responses to the two statements related to this area of investigation indicate a high level of readiness for self-directed learning 4.1 a) (X = 3.78) denotes a desire to be involved in the decision-making concerning content and methodology.

4.1 b) (X = 1.72) reinforces this impression as it illustrates disagreement with the expectation of being told what to do, suggesting that Thai students wish to have some choice in the manner in which their education proceeds.

Table 4.2: Area of investigation – independent work in language learning

While the average response to 4.2 a) (X = 2.75) is inconclusive as an indicator of students' level of readiness for self-directed learning, the disagreement with 4.2 b) (X = 1.72) shows a preference by students to not have teachers direct activities in the classroom. This infers that they prefer some other way for teaching and learning to be conducted.

Table 4.3: Areas of investigation – importance of class and teacher

The average response to 4.3 a) (X = 1.49) illustrates a strong disagreement with the statement, suggesting that the average student does not regard the class and the teacher as very important. If these two traditional factors of education are not regarded as important, there is the possibility that Thai students value other means of teaching and learning more highly. These may include less traditional methods which allow more freedom and student control.

Table 4.4: Area of investigation – learning styles

Both average responses to 4.4 a) (X = 2.44) and 4.4 b) (X = 3.62) show a high level of readiness for self-directed learning.

There appears to be a less that enthusiastic average response to statement 4 a) concerning the effectiveness of teacher-directed classes compared to other forms of education. This suggests that Thai students believe that alternative means of teaching

and learning, not involving the teacher in the traditional role, are more efficient. One of these alternative means may be self-directed learning.

4.4 b) indicates that cooperative work is valued as part of the development of independent language learning. Cooperative work is one of the available options for the self-directed learner.

Table 4.5: Area of investigation – independent learning activities

The average responses to 4.5 b) (X = 1.74) and 4.5 c) (X = 1.84) suggest that students disagree with both statements that their "reading and listening are developed better" and "writing and speaking improve quicker" under the direction of a teacher. The results imply that Thai students believe there are better ways of enhancing the skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking that may involve more self-directed strategies independent of the teacher.

The average response to 4.5 a) (X = 2.58) provides an interesting contrast to the results of 4.5 b) and 4.5 c). The tendency to disagree with statement 4.5 a) shows a desire to work with the teacher in grammar and vocabulary activities. This may suggest that Thai students consider these activities more difficult and/or more important than the four language skills involved in the other two statements, and therefore believe the presence of the teacher to be more necessary.

Table 4.6: Area of investigation – selection of content

Both average responses to 4.6 a) and 4.6 b) fall in the medium bracket and neither suggest a readiness or otherwise for self-directed learning.

Table 4.7: Area of investigation – self-confidence

The average response to 4.7 a) (X = 2.5) indicates that Thai students have self-confidence to be involved in the setting of aims of language learning, a good indicator of readiness for self-directed learning. This is reinforced by the disagreement with 4.7 f) (X = 2.46) showing that Thai students have a willingness to use their language skills.

However, this readiness does not appear to be so apparent when dealing with problems. The agreement with 7 c) (X = 4.05) shows an inability to adequately deal with obstacles to learning, a skill necessary in effective self-directed learning.

Table 4.8: Area of investigation – motivation

The agreements with 4.8 a) (X = 3.56) and 4.8 b) (X = 4.22) suggest contrary levels of readiness for self-directed learning. Self-directed learning depends on the learner being self-motivated, not relying on being driven by such things as external assessments. The average response agreeing with 4.8 b) supports this concept.

Agreement with 4.8 a) shows a low readiness for self-directed learning and does not support 4.8 b).

Table 4.9: Area of investigation – self-assessment

Both average responses to 4.9 a) and 4.9 b) fall in the medium bracket and neither suggest a readiness or otherwise for self-directed learning.

5.3 Further discussion of results – what do they mean?

The levels of readiness for self-directed learning suggested by the average responses of the 691 Thai students involved in this study for the 23 statements outlined above were:

- very high   1
- high   10
- medium   9
- low   3
- very low   0

This distribution suggests that the Thai students who responded to this questionnaire had a reasonably strong desire to be exposed to different forms of teaching and learning other than traditionally organised ones. A recurring feature of the responses was the students' wish to break away from the teacher-directed classes and teacher-dominated methods of teaching and learning, allowing them to play a more active role

in deciding the course of their education [see (4.1 a), 4.1 b), 4.2 b), 4.3 a), **4.4 a)**, 4.4 b). 4.5 b). 4.5 c), 4.7 a)].

What form this more active role takes is difficult to say from the data provided by this study, but the responses suggested that it takes a structure less inclined to that involving the teacher directing proceedings with the students as passive followers. This type of teaching and learning is the one traditionally used in Thai schools, and it is the one that most of the 691 students involved in this study would have been exposed to before entry to university. Whether the responses expressing their desire for other teaching and learning methods not so reliant on the teacher were a reaction to dissatisfaction with their schooling or a clearly thought out and true effort to change Thai educational methods is a point of conjecture. Whatever the reason, their feelings for other methods of teaching and learning were reasonably strong.

5.4 Summary

This chapter presents a direct interpretation and discussion of the results of the study in the Thai context.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents some concluding ideas and recommendations for further investigation based on the concepts of learner autonomy and self-directed learning, and the findings of this study.

6.2 Concluding remarks

The average responses to the statements used in this study suggest that there was no evidence of a tension in the Thai students' attitudes caused by their cultural background and the use of what some believe to be a culturally inappropriate teaching and learning approach. It would appear from the average responses generally that the students were eager to have opportunities to be exposed to other methods as there was dissatisfaction with traditional methods of teaching and learning that involved the teacher at the front of the class directing proceedings.

In the Thai context, this is an interesting outcome as most school settings, and some university ones, use such methods, yet it would appear that students do not see them as necessarily effective. The Thai student body is not one to protest about perceived injustices and/or inefficiencies in its system, but this study appears to indicate that the

students involved in responding to this questionnaire believed that there was something wrong with their educational experiences. What the students consider to be better alternatives to organising teaching and learning needs to be the subject of further investigation.

6.3 Recommendations for further study

To discover more information on this situation requires further study involving in-depth interviews with a selection of the 691 students to discover more about their attitudes to teaching and learning generally and self-directed learning specifically.

If learner autonomy and self-directed learning has much to offer and is the option that students want, then how is the Thai education system to provide the skills and attitudes to its personnel? Darasawang (2000), in considering the Thai context, highlighted three factors:

a) providing an environment where the learners can experience and exercise autonomy,

b) providing psychological preparation to change learners' attitudes towards learning and

c) focusing on learning strategies that enable the learners to take charge of their learning successfully

(p.44)

Much of the research evidence for the views of Darasawang (2000) on self-determination, self-access facilities, learners' psychological preparation involving motivation and beliefs, and learners' methodological preparation arose from studies

completed in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, but the three factors are still highly relevant to the present day situation in Thailand.

The social aspect of learning autonomy and self-directed learning is one that needs further investigation as it applies to Thai education. A number of researchers raised this important feature that may be appropriate to the Thai context (Jones, 1995; Benson, 1996; Lee, 1998; McClure, 2001; Tagaki, 2003).

Further study also needs to address the role of teachers in the education process – if there is widespread student dissatisfaction with the way in which teachers fulfill their functions, what do students believe to be the teachers' role in the alternative methods? What do teachers themselves consider to be their contribution to other methods concentrating less on teacher direction and more on student participation? Answers to these questions would provide insights into more effective methods of teaching and learning, more in tune with what the students and teachers themselves identify as appropriate to their needs and cultural preferences. The concepts of *"teacher counselling"* raised by Lee (1998) in the effective development of learner autonomy, and the matchmaking between students and teachers' styles proposed by Rodgers (2003) are areas for further consideration.

This study showed that this particular group of Thai students had a relatively strong opinion about methods with which they were traditionally familiar, and were keen to try other approaches to teaching and learning. The opposition to teacher-directed strategies indicated that it is time to start to explore alternatives, one of which is to

develop students' skills of taking responsibility and making decisions in their

education so that they can become effective self-directed learners.

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Appendix 1: Areas of investigation *(after the work of Broady, E., 1996)*

Area	Statements	Areas of investigation
1	2	Readiness for self-direction
2	2	Independent work in language learning
3	2	Importance of class and teacher
4	2	Learning styles
5	3	Independent language learning activities
6	2	Selection of content
7	6	Self-confidence
8	2	Motivation
9	2	Self-assessment

Appendix 2: Questionnaire *(after the work of Broady, E., 1996)*

No	Statement	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 undecided	4 agree	5 strongly agree
1 a)	I prefer classes where I am encouraged to take part in deciding what will be learned and how to learn					
1 b)	I expect the teacher to tell me exactly what to do					
2 a)	In language learning, I enjoy tasks where I can learn on my own much more than tasks where I work with my teacher					
2 b)	In language learning, I prefer teachers to lead class activities					
3 a)	In language learning, the class environment and the teacher are very important					
3 b)	In language learning, I am able to work outside of the class and without the teacher					
4 a)	Teacher-fronted classes are more productive in language learning than other types of classroom activities					
4 b)	Group work is an important step to finally working on my own in language learning					
5 a)	I prefer to work independently of the teacher in grammar and vocabulary activities					
5 b)	My reading and listening skills are developed better under the guidance of a teacher					
5 c)	My writing and speaking improve quicker under teacher supervision					
6 a)	I think the teacher should select the content for language learning					
6 b)	I am able to choose what to learn in language learning					
7 a)	Teachers are the ones who should be responsible for the aims and objectives of language learning					
7 b)	I am able to decide the aims and objectives of language learning					
7 c)	I give up when I experience problems in language learning					
7 d)	I am able to find solutions to problems that I experience in language learning					
7 e)	I feel confident about my language skills					
7 f)	I am reluctant to use my language skills					
8 a)	External assessment is the thing that motivates me to work					
8 b)	I am motivated by such things as self-satisfaction and understanding, not external assessment					
9 a)	I feel capable of assessing my own work					
9 b)	Students should not be responsible for assess their own work					